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FEUDAL FRANCE

IN THE

FRENCH EPIC

FEUDAL FRANCE

IN THE

FRENCH EPIC

A STUDY OF FEUDAL FRENCH INSTITUTIONS
IN HISTORY AND POETRY

BY

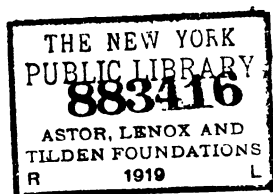
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Respectfully inscribed to Dr. F. L. Critchlow who, as a friend, first suggested the theme of this work and, as a master, led the way through many a confusing and uncertain path.

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FEUDAL FRANCE IN THE FRENCH EPIC

INTRODUCTION

FRENCH EPIC POETRY

At the outset of this study it is desirable to make a definite analysis of the meaning of the term *French Epic Poetry* and what part of this corpus is to be styled *Feudal Poetry*. In a large sense almost all narrative works in verse composed prior to the fourteenth century, and dealing even remotely with life in France, are known as the *French Epic*. The designation covers a long period of composition, and a wide variety of material and treatment. It includes the *Chanson de Roland* of the primitive period, and at the other extreme of age and style the *Cligés* and similar works of Chrétien de Troyes.

The age of the first production of epic poetry in France has long been a question of dispute. Almost as many answers have been given as there are scholars in the field. Gaston Paris and Gautier have supported the theory of the origin of the epic poetry in the *cantilènes*, i.e., short songs that were first composed on the field of battle by the warriors, who were also poets—these songs at some less remote time being developed into the *chansons de geste* as they are preserved in the manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Rajna, Gröber, and Jordan, have maintained that the *chansons* are direct continuations of ancient *chansons* composed, in form similar to those extant, as early as the sixth and seventh centuries. Suchier, Wechssler (also Paul Meyer and Ferdinand Lot), have upheld the opinion that the epic material existed in the remote Middle Ages in the form of legends upon which were based the *chansons*, less ancient in formation than the legends. Finally, Becker (and Jullian) and Bédier, in the last decade or two, have attempted to demonstrate that the French epic poetry is of comparatively recent origin.

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The *Roland*, probably the oldest existing *chanson*, is appropriately known as the sole example of the *National Epic*, strictly speaking. It is marked throughout by a conception of the unity of the territory today known as France, in its struggles during the early medieval period, with the other great Western European powers, especially Spain. The second great distinguishing feature of this poem is the grandeur of the Emperor, and the devotion to him, developed to a degree not equalled in any other epic poem. Other *chansons*, such as the *Couronnement de Louis*, show in remarkable exemplification one or other of these two traits,—national unity, or exaltation of the Imperial ideal,—but no other poem shows the same magnificent conception of unity, patriotism, and loyalty consistently sustained throughout a work of this magnitude.

On the other hand, the *Chigés* of Chrétien de Troyes, for example, written about 1170, and similar works of the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century, show the epic in the last stages of its progression. The *Chigés* is one of those poems termed *Court Epics*, by reason of their treatment of material of Knighthood and Chivalry, in the style that resulted (1) from the high development of aristocratic social life at the royal court, (2) from the consequent elevation of women, and (3) from the influence of audiences that delighted in fantastic depiction.

These two representative poems, the *Roland* and the *Chigés*, delimit in a general way the extent of the field. But the transition from the one type to the other occupied centuries, and produced epic poetry displaying modifications at every stage in the long intermediary passage. Starting with the *Roland*, the purely *National Epic*, and tracing the slow variation through to the latest, most recent form, the *Court Epic*, various poems are to be found that may be grouped under a few large divisions. The first of these, after the *National*, is the *Pre-Feudal Epic*, a term applied in the present study to a group of poems that reflect in their material and treatment the social and political life of the period of French history following the disruption of the Empire in 843, up to the firm establish-

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ment toward the end of the tenth century of that system of government today classed as *Feudalism* by the historians. In this group, the *Pre-Feudal Epic*, there may be introduced a subdivision. The earlier of these poems are distinguished by a strong reminiscence of the imperial power of the Carolingians prior to the territorial division of 843; in the later poems is to be noted the extreme anarchy that darkened the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries, when the king had been divested of all power, and nascent Feudalism had not as yet systematically substituted itself in the place of the royal government, which had practically ceased to exist. And the same sort of subdivisions, of classes within classes, might be made again in this group, and in the classifications to follow. There is no real limit to the possible divisions except the number of poetic works, for no two poems may be assigned with certainty to the same date, and each reflects a different stage in the development of society and government. The delimitations are therefore broad for the purpose of general survey, and minor distinctions are reserved for subsequent chapters.

Following the Pre-Feudal period comes the epoch of the completest and most uniform prevalence of the Feudal system. And corresponding to this period of time is the *Feudal Epic* proper, represented by poems few in number, but sharply distinct from the earlier and later groups. In these poems is reflected the swift-moving, constant struggle of the working of feudal society. For although the system of Feudalism may be accounted established during this period,—viz., the end of the tenth to the beginning of the twelfth century—the social and political status of the individual was not fixed with any degree of permanency; the individual rose or fell in the scale of the feudal hierarchy according to the measure of his manifested strength. And this never-ending strife occupied the whole thought of the men of that age, and found rich expression in the truly feudal poems, such as the *Garin le Loherain*.

After Feudalism had held sway for some two centuries of

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turbulent life, the reaction set in toward a more stabilized central government, and as the power of the crown grew and the ill-used might of the nobility was held in increasing check, there followed naturally in the twelfth century an era of higher intellectual, religious, and social development, tending toward the comparative serenity of the absolutist age that began toward the end of the thirteenth century. The strength that had been expended at home in the struggles of nascent Feudalism was diverted into the Crusades. Immediately the change was reflected in the poetry. Less impressed by local events, with a wider vision of the relation of France to the remainder of Western Europe, the people turned eagerly to the tales of romanesque adventure outside their own country, in Italy especially, from which returning warriors and pilgrims brought back stories of foreign interest. This new view—half-vision, half-knowledge—of the outside world stimulated a revival of the old *chansons*, and caused in their style and material a change from the realistic presentation of the turmoil familiar in early feudal life to a fanciful narrative of travel and romance beyond the borders of France. This style of *chanson* has been designated by the class-name *roman d'aventure*. Even in these poems, fantastic as they are, there is of necessity a reflection of feudal conditions now fully established, and, for that reason, of less prominence in the eyes of the people and also less important because of the increasing authority of the king. So these poems, the *romans d'aventure*, are frequently referred to in this study as the *late feudal poetry*. The feudal element is still largely in evidence though shadowed by the imaginative treatment common to this age.

The transition from the late feudal poetry, or *romans d'aventure*, to the *court epic*, or *romance of chivalry*, came about near the end of the thirteenth century as a natural result of the more refined court life, the influence of the Christian element of Chivalry, the consequent worship of women, and the quest of glory for glory's sake.

Thus far have been briefly traced the gradually changing social conditions of France from the ninth to the thirteenth

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century, from the *National* or *Royal* period through the subsequent anarchy to the establishment of the feudal system, then through the gradual decay, or lessening importance, of the feudal régime to a second royal or absolutist age. And, corresponding to the shifting state of society during these centuries, the poetry has been grouped in sequence from the *National* to the *Pre-Feudal*, the *Feudal* proper, the *late Feudal* or *roman d'aventure*, up to the *Court Epic* or *Romance of Chivalry*.

Now in this fashion of grouping there is the implication of the method that is used throughout the present study; and a few words are needed to explain and justify the process that is to be employed. In the first place, prior to the last decade of the nineteenth century, the only method, save that of imaginative speculation, of approaching the study of the French epic poems and the age of their composition, has followed one general line: the paralleling of historical events with supposed versions of the same events recounted in the poetry. This style of investigation has yielded much of value, as employed, for instance, by Rajna in his *Origini dell' epopea francese*. It has, however, two flaws that vitiate any conclusions: the first is that the supposititious identification of incidents from the poetry with historical events, is most often secured through the manipulating of details and the employment to a large degree of the elements of faith and imagination. Secondly, granted the correctness of the parallel, there has been proved nothing except that the poem in question, or at any rate the historical element of it, is more recent than the actual event. How much more recent can only be inaccurately and unsatisfactorily inferred.

Another method has been employed of late years. P. A. Becker and C. Jullian, both writing in the last decade of the nineteenth century, suggested, more or less incidentally, the connection of a single institution of a single century, viz., the Pilgrimages in the twelfth century—as the cause of the origin of a part of the epic poetry. The process is correct as far as it is carried. That is, a social institution in the twelfth cen-

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ture is seen reflected to a certain degree in some of the late feudal poetry. It is known that the institution did not exist prior to the century named, and the conclusion follows that the depiction of it in the poetry could have been introduced only by a poet of the twelfth century, or possibly of the early thirteenth. The result of this method is undeniable as far as it was carried by Becker and Jullian. Since their works, Bédier has produced his *Légendes épiques*, in which the same method is employed—in fact the idea of the importance of the pilgrimages has been developed at greater length.

The limitation of the view of these three scholars to a single phase of medieval life has of course given results equally limited. The fact that a single institution of the twelfth century is reflected in the poetry does not demonstrate that all custom-material in the poetry is of the same century. Nor does it follow, because some elements of some poems belong to the twelfth century, that all elements of all poems belong to the same period. The method, however, is valid except for its limitations. And it has been employed in the present study. For if the identity of a custom in poetry and history proves only the age of that element, it is possible to ascertain the age of the poetry as a whole by seeking out the prevalence in history of a number of customs and institutions depicted in the poetry. If there be chosen a dozen different phases of the life of several centuries which are identical in history and poetry, these elements of the poetry may be dated with certainty. Or in other words: if in the various poems, or in the same poem, elements of social life, manners, customs, political and geographical details, can be fixed definitely in any centuries or century; if these customs can be determined as to their prevalence, then the poems may be assigned without the possibility of contradiction to the period indicated and delimited by the manners, customs, politics, etc.

There is one superficial objection to be met: perhaps the poet of the twelfth century might have been intimately acquainted with the manners and customs of the ninth century. A social custom or political conception could not have come

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down by word of mouth, through so long a period of time, unless in a more or less fixed legendary form. But suppose that this poet has at his command all the documents that are accessible to students at the present day; suppose he had even more documentary evidence which has since been lost—suppositions absurd, but they will be advanced or intimated—suppose this twelfth-century scholar had had all this material at hand and had utilized it. Then consider whether many people of his epoch would understand and appreciate his work. How much popularity would such a work enjoy, filled with antique relics dug out of Latin chronicles hundreds of years old? How would this scholar and poet educate his audience, unlettered, untutored warriors and tradesmen? Every introduction of an institution or custom that was not actually prevalent at the time of the first composition and recitation would be detrimental to any clearness or intelligibility. It is logically and obviously necessary therefore to believe that any element found in the poetry was introduced at a time when that element was familiar to the common people—when the custom involved was in vogue. Consequently the poetry may be dated with absolute certainty by the adequate dating of all the elements in it pertaining to manners, customs, institutions, politics, geography.

As a result of these considerations the purpose of the present study is to determine to what extent the various poems may be assigned to definite ages by means of a comparative analysis of social conditions in the body of the poetry, and in the historical documents from the sixth to the twelfth century in France. It has not been possible in an investigation limited in scope as this must be, to consider the whole body of the French epic poetry, nor even for that matter each one of the poems included in the period of time covered by the research. A discrimination has been made consciously, and upon a clearly defined basis. Since this study has been based entirely on the direct reflection of social life in the poetry, those poems have been selected which are most detailed in the presentation of every phase of man's activity during the period of time indicated. As has been emphasized in another connection, the

poems which display most intimate contact with the environment of their composer are those purely feudal in nature. The cycle of the *Loherains*, for example, dating from the eleventh century, is rich in the details of every aspect of feudalism; on the other hand it contains none of the extremely exaggerated and romanesque elements of the later poems, such as the *Amis et Amiles*, a *chanson* of the twelfth century. These distinctly feudal poems have here been assigned to the tenth and eleventh centuries. In addition to the few specimens of unusually faithful portrayal, a number have been included that show most evidently elements of an epoch prior to the full development of feudalism; and still others subsequent in composition to the height of the feudal régime. Accordingly a close study of some score of poems has been made, with greatest emphasis, as has been indicated, upon those that are most reliable in their depiction of the manners, customs, and so forth, of any given period, from the ninth to the twelfth century. In addition, a survey has been made of others, such as the *Amis et Amiles*, which have been deemed too far removed from actual life to be accorded any weight of evidence in such an investigation. As has been said, this score of poems has been chosen after careful consideration. It is quite possible that the identical list would not be chosen by other students of the same field. It may be stated certainly however that no scholar would question the value of the group as a whole for the purpose of the study of French social institutions in the period they represent.

Apropos of the selection made, a comparison of a similar group chosen by Bédier for his *Légendes épiques* is pertinent. It has been mentioned that Bédier approached the question of the age of the poetry from the viewpoint of a social institution: the difference is that this study is from several points of view. Bédier has utilized, however, practically all the poems chosen for this investigation, and certain others in addition. In Bédier's work the choice of *chansons* upon which particular stress is laid was imposed first of all by the necessity of treating poems that do not contain any elements apparently ante-

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dating the twelfth century, and secondly that display as evidently as possible the influence of a single institution, the pilgrimages.

The choice for this study has not been so limited. It is to be noted that the poems most accurate in all details are those which lend greatest support to this study, whereas in the *Légendes épiques*, the chief reliance is on the *roman d'aventure* type of production, less trustworthy as a source of custom-material. The poem of *Garin le Loherain*, for instance, is above all others of the *chansons de geste* a true portrayal of feudal conditions. On the other hand the *Amis et Amiles* is one of those least reliable in its representation of the period of composition. Consequently no support is derived in this study from the *Amis et Amiles*, while due attention is paid to the *Garin*. On the contrary, in Bédier's work, the *Amis et Amiles* and other poems of the sort are a chief basis, and the *Garin* is dismissed as being of value only to the student of geography—more accurately, it might be said, to the student of actual social conditions.

The first *chansons de geste* read by the writer were *Raoul de Cambrai*, and *Auberi le Bourgoing*. The apparent clearness of the depiction of early feudal conditions in these *chansons* led to a study of a larger group, considered in their relation to the possible period of composition; and the age of the institutions in the poetry, also recorded in the chronicles and other historical documents, has been accounted evidence of the period of the composition of the poetry itself.

The effort throughout the study has been to approach the subject at as many different angles as the scope of the work permitted, so that, the same conclusion being reached in every chapter by a different method of attack, the argument might gain weight by reason of the cumulative nature of the evidence. For from whatever point of view the poems were considered, they have been found to offer an identical answer to the question of the date of their composition. The various lines of research followed may be summed up briefly:

This first chapter is an attempt to sketch the field in broad

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lines, to locate this study with respect to the general subject-matter of French epic poetry. The second chapter takes up the question of the localization of the poetry, and likewise offers evidence of the age of the *chansons* by means of the identity of political conditions in the poems, conditions to be found also at one time or another in the recorded history of France. This comparison of poetic material with the records of chronicles, capitularies and other historical documents of the age, is applied throughout the succeeding chapters.

After the territory involved in the action of the feudal poetry has been established, and the considerable coincidence of the details of the poetry with historic political conditions has been emphasized, the discussion passes to the consideration of the nature of the feudal nobleman who, during the period of time represented by the pure feudal epic, lived in that part of France where the poetry originated. Again the identity of the conditions existing in history and poetry is discovered, indicating the high degree of reliance that is to be placed on the poetical works as a source of custom-material, and serving, as in the second chapter, to establish the composition of certain of the *chansons* in an early age, and of many others in a more recent period.

The fourth chapter follows the same method, again from a different point of attack. In it the history of the development of a single institution—the *homme-à-seigneur* relationship without land consideration—is traced from its origin under the first Merovingians to its disappearance at the beginning of the tenth century. And, with this institution as recorded in history as a guide, the respective poems are again assigned to definite periods. This dating of the poetry, although reached by a process distinct from the methods employed in the preceding chapters, tends to confirm the conclusions already indicated.

In the fifth chapter other customs, of various centuries, are considered in both history and poetry, and the identity of the material of the *chansons* with the customs as recorded in the historical documents, serves as further evidence of the validity

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of the conclusions that have been reached with respect to the age of the poetry, and its reliability in regard to custom data.

This study was taken up in the manner outlined, and was carried three quarters of the way toward its logical conclusion before the theories of the various scholars in the field were considered. The study is therefore in the nature of a research conducted for its own sake and without *parti pris*, and consequently the bearing of the work upon the field in general and upon the hypothesis of Bédier in particular, has been reserved for the sixth and concluding chapter.

CHAPTER II

GEOGRAPHY OF THE FEUDAL EPIC

I

The geographical element in the feudal French epic comprises three related phases: first, the territorial extent of France during the periods in which the various poems were composed; second, the sphere of the political influence of France beyond the limits of the district actually subject to the French king; third, the probable locality in which poetry was composed. Each one of these three points has been separately discussed by others prior to this time. The geographical extent of France with reference to a small group of poems, especially the *Roland*, has been treated in a most able fashion by Gautier in his article *L'Idée politique dans les chansons de geste*, although in this essay Gautier lays particular emphasis upon the idea of French nationality in the epic poetry.¹ Gautier's chief contention is that in the *Roland* the word France is applied to the territory known as France in modern times. The contrary view is sustained by C. T. Hoefft in his work *France, Franceis, und Franc im Rolandsliede*.² The extent of France in the more remote Middle Ages, or more particularly, the geographical value of the words *Francia* and *Francus*, has been discussed by G. Kurth in a study entitled *La France et les Francs dans la langue politique du moyen âge*.³ The political relation of France to neighboring countries is well analysed by Fournier in his massive work *Le Royaume d'Arles et de Vienne*.⁴ And finally, the discussion as to the locality in which the poetry was

¹ *Revue des questions historiques*, Paris, 1869, vol. VII, pp. 79 ff.

² Strassburg, 1891.

³ *Revue des questions historiques*, LVII, 337 ff.

⁴ Paris, 1891.

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probably composed finds an important place in Rajna's *Le Origini dell' epopea francese*.⁵

The article of Gautier is concerned chiefly with the consciousness of nationality on the part of the poets; Kurth and Hoefft are interested in the question of terminology rather than in the political status of the territory today known as France. The work of Fournier is purely historical and political. That of Rajna more nearly approaches the field proposed for this study. This scholar's conclusions, however, are based upon the general corpus of the French epic, and are drawn in broad lines. It is intended here to consider only the feudal epic, and to analyse it somewhat closely from the point of view of geographical content and French political history, in order to reveal from these angles what evidence the poetry contains within itself of the original locality of its composition.

In a discussion of the geography of the French feudal epic, a distinction is to be made between the three classes of French epic poetry. The National epic may be practically limited to the *Chanson de Roland*, in which there is no accurate and detailed evidence of geographical knowledge or interest in details of the sort. The poet in the *Roland* distinguishes in a general way larger divisions, such as France and Spain, but he does not concern himself with more local and minute items of geography. Likewise little emphasis is placed on the correctness of place-names in the *romans d'aventure*, as for instance, the second half of the *Raoul de Cambrai*, or the greater part of the *Hervis de Metz*, or the *Guy de Bourgogne*, etc. But the impression of inaccuracy gained from such poems is not to be applied to the feudal, or provincial, epic. For it is noteworthy that the more feudal a poem is in spirit, the more accurate are the geographical details. So in the *Garin le Loherain*, and the first half of the *Raoul de Cambrai*, which attain the highest degree of true feudal representation, the poet displays a fairly accurate knowledge of the districts involved in the action of the poem. This higher accuracy and more detailed style of the feudal or provincial poetry as compared with the National epic and the

⁵ Firenze, 1884, pp. 529-542.

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romans d'aventure, is the natural result of the subject-material. The National epic covers areas so large that the poet could not be expected to be intimately acquainted with the whole field; the accuracy of the *romans d'aventure* suffers from the same largeness of the field of action, and in addition, by reason of their fantastic nature, they are less dependent upon the correctness of details of locality. On the other hand, the poet in the Feudal epic bases his narration directly upon the life of the period, and deals with a comparatively restricted area in the individual poem.

II

Under Charlemagne (768-814) and Louis I (814-840), there was no sharp delimitation of continental Western Europe like that of the three great present-day states of France, Germany, and Italy. The Roman Empire was a political entity, and whatever subdivisions existed were of an administrative nature. But even at this time there was a distinct consciousness of race individuality among the several nations ruled by Charlemagne and his son Louis.⁶ This sense of difference was not nationalism, involving the political limits of the State, but was rather the separation caused by physical barriers, aided by variance of language and custom. Germany, bounded by the Rhine, and Italy, isolated from neighboring states by the Alps and the Rhone, were geographically separate from France.

Recognition of this three-fold character of the Empire is found in a royal decree of the year 806 to the effect that a man might commend himself as a vassal to whom he would, "inter haec tria regna."

This inherent racial cleavage appeared in the first definitive division of the Empire, in 843, under Charles le Chauve. In that year, by the treaty of Verdun, France was established as all that territory west of the Meuse, the Saône, and the Rhône. Between the Rhine, Meuse, Saône, Rhône, was the kingdom of Lothaire, receiving its name of Lorraine (Lothar-

⁶ E. A. Freeman, *Historical Geography of Europe*, Text, I, 134 ff.

⁷ Baluzius, a. 806, I, col. 443, sec. 10.

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ingia) from Lothaire II (855-869). Lothaire's kingdom included also the city of Lyons, and all Italy. Beyond the Rhine, and including the cities of Mainz, Worms, and Speyer, was the kingdom of Germany.⁸

However, in the kingdom of France so constituted under Charles le Chauve, Aquitania, Septimania and Brittany were practically independent.

A distinction should be made at this point between the two uses of the term *France*, in this and later epochs. At the period of the first division in the ninth century, France included all the territory delimited above, viz., that part of the Empire which was not included in Italy and its dependency Lorraine, and Germany. But a second use of the word came into existence, and is a cause of much confusion in the study of the political and geographical history of France. Besides the first and larger application, France denoted the territory ruled over by the king of France. Now, under Charles le Chauve, these two terms were nearly synonymous; Charles governed the greater part of the domain conceded to him by the treaty of Verdun, and had at least a nominal right to the remainder. But under succeeding rulers, the power of the French crown became more and more restricted, until it was limited to the Ile-de-France and immediately adjoining territory. And as soon as this was true, the word France in any text of the period could denote strictly the limited region directly subject to the king, or it might retain the earlier and broader meaning that it possessed at the time of Charles le Chauve. Both of these uses are common in French feudal poetry, but frequently in a context so vague that it is impossible to determine which interpretation is to be given in any particular instance.⁹

III

In the first half or possibly first three quarters of the ninth

⁸ Cf. A. Longnon, *Atlas historique*, Paris, 1912, planche VI, carte for 843; cf. also *Texte explicatif des planches*, planche VI.

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the use of the term *France*, cf. Hoeffft, and Kurth, *supra*. Also Gautier, *L'idée politique*, p. 84, note 3.

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century, there are two poems that should be cited for their geographical and political relation to the epoch. The first of these is the *Floovant*. In a subsequent chapter of this study the age of the poem is discussed in detail; it is sufficient here to say that it has been authoritatively connected with historical events as early as the age of the Merovingians.¹⁰ In the *Floovant*, the palace of the king is given at one time as at Laon and at another as in Paris. The naming of these two places as capitals of the kingdom would imply, of course, that the composition of the poem was subsequent to the division of the Empire in 843. The fact is not in itself conclusive, but there is further evidence in other incidents in the narrative. Floovant is exiled from France, and leaves that realm for the Ardennes, fighting on the banks of the Rhine, and serving a king whose capital is at Beaufort (now Belfort in the Upper Rhine country). Returning to France through Bourgogne, Floovant is crowned at Reims. Such a story involves a France under the rule of a king who does not include the Ardennes nor Bourgogne within his domains, and so could not be prior to the division of 843.¹¹ Other considerations, discussed later on, indicate a very early origin, so that the original poem may be assigned to the middle of the ninth century.

The poem of the *Couronnement de Louis* in its earliest form is also of the same period. This work, composed of not less than five distinct parts, is related to events of the last half of the ninth century, and would seem to have originated near the time of the historical events with which it deals. The action is largely at Aix-la-Chapelle, Laon, and Paris. According to Gaston Paris, the mention of Aix-la-Chapelle is probably a reminiscence of the age when Charlemagne and his son Louis held this place in high favor and made it virtually the capital of the Empire.¹² The mention of Aix-la-Chapelle as one

¹⁰ Cf. Rajna, *Origini*, VI, 131 ff.; cf. also *infra*, chapters IV and V.

¹¹ The treatment of the age of *Floovant* in this chapter is based wholly upon the geographical and political content of the poem. It does not imply that a part of the narrative may not be based upon traditions of earlier origin. Cf. Rajna, *Origini*, 146-7.

¹² *Histoire poétique*, 367 ff. Cf. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. Bury, London, 1900, V, 273 note, and VII, 311.

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of the capital cities of the king of France occurs in other poems of much later composition, but in them the memory is not of the actual fact, but is merely a repetition from the earlier poems, such as the *Couronnement de Louis*, and possibly the *Roland*. That the *Couronnement* was not composed earlier than the last half of the ninth century is shown by the historical events of that period mentioned in the poem.¹³ That it was not very much later is indicated by the considerations presented in the fourth chapter of this study.

Another poem of the same period, or perhaps earlier, has come down in such altered form that it is difficult to establish closely the date of its composition, although it is at any rate not later than the *Couronnement*. This poem is the *Beuves d'Aigremont*, which is incorporated as the first episode of the *Quatre Fils Aymon*. The connection with the main poem is entirely artificial, and although the language is modernized, and the origin obscured in the attempt to connect it with the later poem, the wide differences in manners and customs show valid traces of the antiquity of the *Beuves*.¹⁴ The fragment is a reminiscence of the age of imperial power when the extent of the jurisdiction of the Emperor was limited only by his ability to enforce his will on his rebellious vassals. Aigremont, the home of the baron whose death is related in the poem, is not on the map. The general location is indicated by internal evidence. In travelling from Aigremont to Troyes, Beuves passes through Lombardy;¹⁵ and on another occasion, going from Aigremont towards Paris, he passes through Bourgogne, and is slain there.¹⁶ From this it would appear that Aigremont was in Lombardy. So Beuves would be under the authority of the king of France only if that king were also king of Italy. Such a political status reflected in the poem indicates that the tradition harks back to the age of the Empire of Charlemagne, or of Louis I.

Also in this same period is the *Gormund et Isembard*. The

¹³ Cf. *infra*, chapter IV.

¹⁴ Cf. *Quatre Fils Aymon*, pp. 40-43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 1094.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vv. 1485-97.

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action of this poem centers at Ponthieu, and Saint-Riquier. Ponthieu, an ancient division of France, in the present-day département of the Somme, was under the authority of the French king to a greater or less degree, at least until the accession of Charles le Gros in 884. In the existing fragment of the poem the king is represented as taking a considerable part in the action, as might be expected from the proximity of the scene to the seat of the royal power.

IV

Near the end of his reign, in 870, Charles le Chauve divided Lorraine and Bourgogne with Louis le Germanique. To France fell the western districts between the Meuse and the Scheldt, and the counties of Lyon and Vienne. To Germany went eastern Lorraine, together with transjuran Bourgogne. But France thus enlarged was not to maintain its unity.¹⁷ In 879, at the death of Louis le Bègue, his two sons divided the kingdom between them, Louis III ruling in the north of France, Carloman in Aquitania and Bourgogne. And in 880, Boson, brother-in-law of Charles le Chauve, usurped Bourgogne and Provence, forming a state which, after varying fortunes, established itself as the kingdom of Bourgogne, coming to be known towards the end of the twelfth century as the kingdom of Arles, from the name of its capital city. This kingdom was ruled by independent sovereigns until the year 1032, when at the death of the last sovereign, Rudolph III, it passed by bequest of Rudolph to the Emperor Conrad II. A nominal German domination continued until 1246, when Provence passed by marriage to the House of Anjou.¹⁸

Under Charles le Gros (884-888) and Eudes (888-898) the parts of the kingdom divided by preceding rulers were united again, but neither king had more than nominal authority south of the Loire. During the reign of Charles III, le Simple (898-

¹⁷ Cf. Longnon, *Atlas and Texte*, carte for 870.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, carte for 880. The subject is treated at length in P. Fournier, *Le Royaume d'Arles et de Vienne*, Paris, 1891, especially the first two volumes.

922), Normandy was lost—a loss the extent of which was increased by reason of the weakness of succeeding kings.¹⁹ Not until 1204, at the time of Philip II, was Normandy given back to France. In 1108, at the death of Philip I, the immediate dominion of the king of France was limited to Paris, Melun, Étampes, Orléans, Sens; i.e., the modern départements of the Seine, Seine-et-Oise, Seine-et-Marne, and Loiret. Beyond this the king exercised a certain nominal authority, which grew less as it extended from the Ile-de-France.

V

To this period of extreme central weakness, which prevailed from the accession of Charles III in 898 to the reign of Hugues Capet in 987, are to be assigned the poems of *Raoul de Cambrai*, and *Auberi le Bourgoing*. The primitive nature of the warriors whose deeds are related in these narratives compares well with the *Beuves d'Aigremont*. These two poems of the tenth century, however, are marked with the traces of early feudalism. Both reflect the anarchy of the epoch between the collapse of the royal power and the complete establishment of the feudal system.

The action of the *Raoul* is concentrated about Cambrai and Saint-Quentin. And in this district the barons are entirely free from interference by the king. Politically such was the case throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the first part of the *Raoul* the action is connected nominally with the court of the king at Paris. But this introduction of the king and his court is in the nature of a prologue and accessory basis of the action proper, which transpires beyond the sphere of any active intervention by the king. So much, at least, is true of the primitive part of the *Raoul de Cambrai*. Nominally, in this poem, the feudal lords recognize the king's authority. Actually they are very nearly independent in so far as their conduct does not question his sovereignty. And the picture given by the poet is wholly in keeping with the conditions of that age.

The scene of *Auberi le Bourgoing* is yet further removed

¹⁹ Cf. Longnon, *supra*, carte for 912.

from the influence of the king of France. The action takes place largely in the Ardennes, Bourgogne, and the borders of Bavaria and Switzerland. Also a minor connection is made with Paris and the king, by means of the rather artificial appeal of the robber Lambert for protection against Auberi; and subsequent thereto certain elements of the action have their place at or near Paris.

VI

The poems of *Garin le Loherain*, the *Mort Garin*, and *Gerbert de Metz*, are of the eleventh century. These first two chansons, forming a single story, and composed in similar style, if not by the same author, are very clear in details of geography. The journeys of the warriors to and fro are carefully measured, the poet even stating exact distances, as in the following passage:

A Anserville
A quatre liues de Mez la grant cité.²⁰

The poet's interest in geographical details is clearly shown by the following typical passage:

Il le trouvèrent à Bordelle la cit (p. 186).
Ains que fust vespres à Gironville vint (p. 187).

Gironville is at the mouth of the Gironde, about fifteen miles from Bordeaux.

Li os Begon de Blaives departit (p. 188).

Blayes is fifteen miles from Bordeaux, and thirty from Gironville.

Par Grand Mont va, iluec ont messe oï (p. 188).

Grandmont is on the road from Gascogne to Berry, fifteen miles from Limoges.

A Issoudun en vinrent au dormir (p. 191).

Issoudun is a town in Berry, fifty-five miles from Grandmont.

Droit vers Bourgogne accueillent lor chemin,
Tant que ils vinrent à Bourbon Lancéis,
Assez i ot qui es bains se sunt mis (p. 192).

²⁰ Anserville, now Ancerville-sur-Nied, twelve miles from Metz. *Garin le Loherain*, I, p. 58.

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Bourbon l'Ansy is a very small town in Bourgogne, thirty miles from Autun, and one and a half miles from the Loire. (Cf. Espilly, *Dictionnaire de la France*, *sub voce*).

Droit à Biaugiu firent lor ost venir (p. 193).

Beaujeu is in the Beaujolais, 18 miles from Mâcon.

Sor Belle ville furent li ostel prins (p. 194).

Belleville, on the Saône, is 12 miles from Beaujeu.

Pres de Lions la grant cité de pris,
D'iluec puet-on les cloches cler oir
De la cité, quant on les fait bondir (p. 195).²¹

Thus is seen accurately traced a journey of some 250 miles, with nine towns indicated along the route. The passage demonstrates most convincingly the general reliability of the feudal epic in matters of geography.

As a final instance, it may be suggested that the mention, for example, of a town as small as Naisil (Naix-aux-Forges), or Belin (near Bordeaux), is evidence of an unusually minute geographical knowledge for the age in which the poem was written. Another such typical reference is to the Pont-Girbert, a place so insignificant that only a person familiar with the district would be able to cite it.²²

The action is spread over a comparatively large territory, but is described with the greatest accuracy in the neighborhood of Paris, and the district to the north, Picardy. The chief centers of action are Paris, Verdun, Metz, Senlis, Cambrai, Saint-Quentin, Amiens, Saint-Omer, Laon, Étampes, Bordeaux, and Moriane (Maurienne in Savoie). The king is represented as taking a central position in the action—a fact consistent with the location of the plot in the north of France, in the immediate domains of the king. Northern Bourgogne and the Dauphiné, where a part of the action is cast, were at this time under the nominal sovereignty of France, but were not considered a part of France.²³

The chanson of *Gerbert de Metz* centers approximately at the same places as the preceding two poems, though there is

²¹ *Ibid.*, I.

²² *Ibid.*, I, p. 16.

²³ Cf. Longnon, *supra*, planche XI.

less geographical detail in the fragment of the poem that has come down. A second minor fragment, dealing with the siege of Gerbert at Narbonne, and therefore concerned with a district quite out of the king's jurisdiction, consistently excludes the king from any part in the action.²⁴ The king is not usually omitted in the feudal poems when the action is made to take place within the king's domains.

VII

When Louis VI died, in 1137, his kingdom extended from the Somme and the borders of Flanders to the River Adour and the ridges of the Pyrenees. Finally in 1204 Philip II brought Normandy back to France. Also, during the thirteenth century, the kingdom of Arles was breaking up, and was coming back definitively to French control.²⁵

Beginning with the reign of Louis VI, the feudal poems show the increasing domination of the royal power. And from this time on, the geographical location of the action is of small importance, because everywhere in France the power of the king was making itself felt with constantly increasing effect. This is to be observed in the poems that follow: the *Aye d'Avignon*, of the second quarter of the twelfth century; the second part of the *Quatre Fils Aymon*; the first half of the *Aiol*, about 1160; and the *Gérard de Rossillon*, shortly after; *Ogier*, *Guy de Nanteuil*, *Guy de Bourgogne*, *Otinel*, *Gaydon*, in the last quarter of the century; and the second half of the *Aiol* and the *Hervis de Metz*, and probably some others, in the first decade or two of the thirteenth century.

In addition to the increasing evidence of the king's authority in this last group of poems, there is one other political fact worthy of mention by reason of its bearing on the age of the *Quatre Fils Aymon*. The action of a considerable part of this chanson is in the neighborhood of Bordeaux. In the year 1154, Henry of Anjou became king of England as Henry II, and from that time until 1453 Bordeaux was under English

²⁴ *Die Befreiung Narbonne's durch Gerbert de Mès*, Stengel (*Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Litteratur*, XXIII, 1901, 271-301).

²⁵ Cf. *supra*, p. 18 and note.

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suzerainty.²⁶ The absence of any recognition of the event may be considered as negative evidence that the *Quatre Fils Aymon* was composed prior to this time.

VIII

Thus far the discussion has been chiefly of the general aspects of the geography of the poetry in its relation to the political history of the geography of France. The question yet to be considered is that of the territory in which the poems were composed. Some evidence towards the solution of this problem is to be had by a more detailed analysis of the geographical centers of action in the various poems.

In the first place, it is evident that the district involved in the action of a poem is properly to be taken into account as strong evidence of the place of its composition.²⁷ Two obvious reasons point to this: first, the fact that a poet living, say, in the Cambrésis, would be interested most naturally in that region, and could count most surely upon holding his audience with the narration of the deeds of heroes whose lives were local traditions of the general Picard district. In the second place a Picard poet would not by preference treat of remote regions, such as Provence, or Spain, except in a manifestly fanciful tale, with no pretense to naming actual places; for the difficulties of travel, and the lack of reliable means of inter-communication between districts, made it impossible for a man to be accurately acquainted with all parts of the country. This is especially true of those poems composed in the tenth century or earlier, although it is still relatively true of an epoch as late as the *chansons de Garin* in the eleventh century. For the poet in the *Garin*, thoroughly conversant as he is with France as a whole, shows a preference for and a greater accuracy in the district immediately about Paris, and in the region to the north.

²⁶ Cf. Longnon, *Atlas*, planche XII, carte for 1154.

²⁷ Cf. P. Paris, *Garin*, I, xix. Speaking of Jean de Flagy (author of at least a part of the *Garin*), Paris says: "Jean de Flagy était sans doute né sur les marches de Champagne: . . . Ce qui doit le supposer, c'est l'exactitude minutieuse avec laquelle il décrit les lieux et les édifices, détermine les distances et distingue les nombreuses familles féodales de cette partie de la France."

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The remainder of this chapter is therefore devoted to a tabulation of the principal points of action in the poems already mentioned. The effort is not to reproduce every place name that occurs in the poetry, but to single out only those that are deemed of importance in the action of each poem. And for the sake of comparison, and because the poems naturally lend themselves to such treatment, the discussion is in three divisions, according to the epoch in which each group of poems falls.

IX

The first group comprises the six poems composed during the ninth and tenth centuries: *Floovant*, *Couronnement de Louis*, *Beuves d'Aigremont*, *Gormund et Isembard*, *Raoul de Cambrai*, *Auberi le Bourgoing*. The cities and districts in which the action takes place are as follows:

In the *Floovant*: Laon (Aisne), Paris (Seine), Ardennes Forest (Belgian border), Bank of the Rhine River, Beaufort (Belfort in the Upper Rhine country), Château Auvillers (in Burgundian territory),²⁸ Bourgogne,²⁹ Saint Remi (at Laon).

In the *Couronnement de Louis*: Aix-la-Chapelle,³⁰ Tours (Indre-et-Loire), Poitiers (Vienne), Bordeaux (Gironde), Montreuil-sur-mer (Montreuil in the Pas-de-Calais), Paris, Laon.

In the *Beuves d'Aigremont*: Paris, Aigremont (in Northern Lombardy), Lombardy, Troyes (Aube), Floridon (in Bourgogne), Bourgogne.

In the *Gormund et Isembard*: Ponthieu (Somme), Saint-Riquier (Somme, near Abbeville).³¹

In the *Raoul de Cambrai*: Cambrai (Nord), Origny (Aisne), Saint-Quentin (Aisne), Paris.

In the *Auberi le Bourgoing*: Paris, Geneva, Ostesin (in the Marche

²⁸ Cf. Langlois, *Table des Noms propres de toute nature compris dans les chansons de geste*, Paris, 1904, *sub voce*: Langlois says merely in France, but at this time the part of France indicated was Bourgogne. Cf. *supra*, p. 18, historical statement for Bourgogne.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁰ In general, territory outside of France is not included in the discussion. Exception is made of the districts adjoining France on the North and East.

³¹ Ponthieu was an ancient division of France, with Abbeville as the chief city.

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de Bourgogne), Ostenne (Bourgogne?), Vienne (on the Rhône, Isère), Langres (Haute-Marne), Bavaria, Oridon (in the Ardennes Forest), Château d'Aufais (between Hainaut and Bavaria), Clarençon (Ardennes Forest?).

In the first four of the above six poems the geography is somewhat impaired, probably by reason of frequent redaction. The last two are more precise, especially the *Raoul de Cambrai*, in which the poet consistently shows thorough knowledge of the district in which he places the action of the poem. This may be explained by the fact that the *Raoul de Cambrai* and the *Auberi le Bourgoing*, poems of the tenth century, are of later composition than the preceding four chansons, and have consequently suffered less at the hands of redactors, in coming down to the period of fixation, the thirteenth century.

The territory in which the greater part of the action of this group of poems centers may be located by a line drawn as follows: from Montreuil (Pas-de-Calais) to Paris, then through Troyes (Aube) to Vienne (Isère); due east to Northern Italy, then North along the western valley of the Rhine to Aix-la-Chapelle; southwest to the Ardennes, and northwest to Montreuil. Or, to state it in general figures, a parallelogram along the eastern border of France from Vienne (fifty miles north of Grenoble in the Isère) north to Aix-la-Chapelle, some 350 miles in length north and south and 120 miles across east and west, plus a triangle with base along the longer side of the parallelogram, the three corners at Vienne, Montreuil, Ardennes, respectively. Besides this territory, in the two poems, *Floovant* and the *Couronnement de Louis*, there is minor action to the southwest of Paris. It has already been indicated, however, that these two poems, for the reason of their great age and wide divergence in their present form from what was the original, cannot be accorded an equal weight of evidence with the chansons of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Even in the *Floovant* and the *Couronnement*, the major part of the action takes place in the territory outlined, and only the secondary adventures are made to the southwest. So it may be said, from the point of view of geographical evidence, that the

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earliest feudal poetry had its origin in the eastern and northern borderlands of France, but especially in the Burgundian districts, and the adjoining part of France. In the second place, there is to be noted in all these poems a connection with Paris, or with Paris and Laon, as capital of France.³² So the poet, living as he may well have done, on the outermost borders of the kingdom, nevertheless felt himself a Frenchman by race and preference, though possibly at times under foreign domination politically.³³

X

The second group, composed of poems of the eleventh century, comprises the *Garin le Loherain*, the *Mort Garin*, the *Gerbert de Metz*, and the *Anseïs de Metz*.³⁴ These four poems are parts of a single narrative, and are practically identical in territory. The chief course of the action in this group may therefore be listed together as follows:³⁵

Lyon (on the Rhône, Rhône), Paris, Fossés (Seine-et-Oise), Sens (Yonne), Soissons (Aisne), Lagny (Seine-et-Marne), Troyes, Châlons (Marne), Verdun (Meuse), Metz (Lorraine), Gorze (12 miles from Metz, Lorraine), Laon (Aisne), Cambrai, Cologne, Ancerville-sur-Nied (12 miles from Metz, Lorraine), Langres, Moriane (Maurienne, Savoie),³⁶ Vienne, Valparfonde (12 miles from Chambéry, Savoie), Saint-Quentin, Saint-Omer (Pas-de-Calais), Ponthieu, Amiens (Somme), Crèvecœur (Oise), Dijon (Côte-d'Or), Château-Thierry (Aisne), Gironville (Gironde?), Grandmont (near Limoges, Haute-Vienne), Neuf-Chatel (near Laon, Aisne), Plesseis (in the Bordeaux), Bar-le-duc (Meuse), Naisil (Naix-aux-Forges, near Bar-le-duc,

³² Except the *Gormund et Isembard*, which, being fragmentary, cannot be definitely called an exception; and this poem, moreover, includes in the action a King Louis of France, who of course had a capital at Paris or Laon. Cf. G. Paris, *Histoire poétique*, 367 ff. for a discussion of Paris, Laon, and Aix-la-Chapelle, as residences of the king of France in the French National Epic poetry.

³³ Cf. Brockstedt, *Floovent-Studien*, Kiel, 1907, p. 162.

³⁴ Not edited. Cf. *Histoire littéraire*, XXII, pp. 633-641. The fragments published hardly warrant an unqualified judgment. The style of the parts available indicates a period several decades later than the *Garin* and the *Mort Garin*.

³⁵ In *Die Befreiung Narbonne's durch Gerbert de Mès*, the action is at Narbonne (Aude).

³⁶ Generally the modern names are given, except when the connection is not obvious, in which case the ancient name is given first, and the modern in parentheses.

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Meuse), Bordeaux, Orléans (Loiret), Cahors (Lot), Blaye (Gironde), Lens (Pas-de-Calais), Blancafort (Blanquefort, Gironde), Valenciennes (Nord), Senlis (Oise), Saint-Michel (Mont-Saint-Michel, Manche), Étampes (Seine-et-Oise), Péronne (Somme), Vauxore (Aisne), Bar-sur-Aube (Aube), Limoges (Haute-Vienne), Bourges (Cher), Berry (ancient district of France, capital city Bourges), Saint-Macaire (Gironde), Mousson (Meurthe-et-Moselle), Rethel (Ardennes), Hainaut (province of Belgium), Vermandois (ancient division of France, capital city Saint-Quentin).

In these four poems of the second group, the change in the field of action from the first group is to be noted as follows: first, there is a concentration of action in Picardy, Champagne, and the Ile-de-France, while Eastern France still maintains a position of some importance. The second feature is the placing of a not inconsiderable part of the action southwest of Paris as far as Bordeaux. Whether there is any particular significance in the direction of this extension is not apparent.⁸⁷

XI

The third group of poems comprises those which were composed during the twelfth century. In approximate order of composition they are: *Aye d'Avignon*, *Quatre Fils Aymon* (second section), *Quatre Fils Aymon* (remainder), *Aiol*, *Gérard de Rossillon*, *Ogier*, *Guy de Nanteuil*, *Guy de Bourgogne*, *Otinél*, *Gaydon*, *Hervis de Metz*. The action is centered as follows:

In the *Aye d'Avignon*: Laon, Soissons, Avignon (Vaucluse), Lorian (?), Graillemont and the Plains of Landemore (South France).

In the *Quatre Fils Aymon* (second section, from the end of the *Bewves d'Aigremont* episode to the conclusion of the adventures in the Ardennes): Ardennes Forest.

In the *Quatre Fils Aymon* (remainder): Paris, Bordeaux, Gasconne, Trémoigne (Dortmund in Westphalia).

In the *Aiol*: Bordeaux, Poitiers, Orléans, Bourges, Langres, Lausanne (Switzerland); also in Spain, at Pampelune.

In the *Gérard de Rossillon*: Ardennes Forest, Avignon, Rossillon (ancient province of France, almost all the département of the

⁸⁷ Cf. *supra*, p. 22.

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Pyrénées-Orientales), Châtillon (Côte-d'Or), Orléans, Paris, Avalon (Yonne), Plains of Valberon (Vaubouton, near Vézelay, Yonne), Dijon, Peira Nauza (Pierenauxe, near the town of Roussillon in the Isère).⁸⁸

In the *Ogier*: Paris, Saint-Omer, Besançon (Doubs), Reims, Lausanne, Cambre (near Aoste), Aûste (Aoste in Piedmont), Losarie (at the foot of the Alps, between Besançon and Italy), Laon, Chastel-Fort (lower Rhône River), Montchevroel (near Chastel-Fort), Beauvais (Oise), Dijon, Yvorie (Ivrée, in Italy), Saint-Tieri (near Saint-Ajosse), Saint-Ajosse (in Italy), Vergiaus (Vercell, in Piedmont).

In the *Guy de Nanteuil*: Paris, Étampes, Samois (near Fontainebleau, Seine-et-Marne), Nanteuil (Oise); Paris and Nanteuil are most important.

In the *Guy de Bourgogne*: Paris. (The remainder of the action is in Spain.)

In the *Otinel*: Paris. (The remainder of the action is in Lombardy.)

In the *Gaydon*: Angers (Maine-et-Loire), Orléans, Nobles (in Spain), Val de Glaye (in France). Scene chiefly at Angers, which is considered outside France. (Cf. p. 327.)

In the *Hervis de Mets*: Metz, Lovaing (Louvain in Belgium), Nivelles (in Belgium), Bruxelles, Senlis, Paris, Provins (Seine-et-Marne?), Lagny.

The most evident trait of this twelfth century poetry is the apparent lack of attention to geographical details, as compared with the preceding group, the poetry of the eleventh century. In the second place there is to be noted the constantly enlarging territory included in the action. The districts to the north and east of France still retain the preponderance of the action, but in no exclusive degree; the whole of France is involved, and Italy as well. This broadening of the field of action is of course quite in keeping with the gradually extending power of the king of France.

XII

The general observations that result from the above analysis of the place-names in the feudal poetry may be briefly stated as follows: In the first place, it is evident that the various poems reflect to a considerable degree the political geography of France at the respective epochs of composition of the individual poems. Conversely, this coincidence of data in history and poetry confirms the ages assigned to the various chansons.

⁸⁸ Cf. Langlois, *Table des Noms propres, sub voce*.

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There is a certain confusion due to an indefinite use of the word France, resulting from the failure to distinguish, in the post-Carolingian and Feudal periods, between the territory directly ruled by the king, and that affiliated with the French nation by race and preference.

Secondly, it has been observed that the poems which are the most feudal in spirit and age are those in which the geographical details are treated with the greatest accuracy; namely, *Raoul de Cambrai*, *Garin le Loherain*, *Mort Garin*. In this group of feudal poetry, the more a chanson tends towards the *roman d'aventure* style, the less accurate is the geography, as in the *Hervis de Metz*, *Guy de Bourgogne*, etc. And the same proportion of correctness in the same poems will be found, as the discussion of succeeding chapters will show, to prevail in regard to the feudal customs reflected by the poetry.

Finally, as indicating in a general way the locality of the composition, the scene of the action of the poetry may be traced thus: during the ninth century the poetry had its origin on the eastern borderlands of France and the adjacent countries. The authors were French, if not by political affiliation, at least by racial connection and personal preference. Almost at the same time the field of action spread along the northern border, implying a similar extension of composition. During the tenth century, the *Raoul de Cambrai*, and the *Auberi le Bourgoing* evidence the action even more definitely in these same districts, Picardy and Bourgogne especially. The eleventh century shows a continuation of the original influence, but in addition marks the beginning of the extension of the action to southwestern France. In the more accurate poems of this time, however, the *Garin*, and the *Mort Garin*, the territorial preference is still Picardy, Champagne, and the Ile-de-France. Finally, in the twelfth century, the process of diffusion is completed: practically the whole of France is included impartially in the action of the poetry, and Italy has come to play a considerable part. From this time on, geography has no general value for the determination of the origin of the Feudal French poetry.

CHAPTER III

TRAITS OF THE FEUDAL BARON.

I

The purpose of the present chapter is to point out certain salient traits of character of the feudal baron¹ as he is portrayed in the body of the poetry specified in chapter I of this study, represented as dwelling within territory the extent of which has been delimited in chapter II. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century there appeared two notable works on medieval life and customs, *Das höfische leben* by Alwin Schultz (1879-80),² and *La Chevalerie* by Léon Gautier (1884). The studies of both these scholars are of great constructive value in this field, yet by the very nature of their methods of approach neither has given a composite portrait of the feudal man as he really was in those times. Schultz's work, done from the point of view of an art historian, has rather the value of a dictionary of medieval life in almost itemized detail, whereas Gautier has produced an historical novel with the Knight of Chivalry depicted in high romantic coloring. Both writers drew their materials from virtually identical sources. Each method has its defect as a medium of interpretation of the inner qualities of the feudal man, especially by reason of the use of sources so widely divergent in age and quality as the *Roland*, the later *roman d'aventure*, and the Court Epic. The endeavor in this study, necessarily much more restricted in scope, is to avoid either of these ex-

¹ The distinction is to be made between the modern title of *baron*, conferred by the royal authority, and the feudal meaning of the word. Baron is here used in the feudal sense, i.e., primarily, any one of the great feudal lords, and secondarily any valiant warrior.

² *Das höfische leben zur zeit der minnesinger*, 2d ed., Leipzig, 1889-90.

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tremes by considering only those characteristics which are of first importance, while at the same time limiting the study to the period of the full and unhindered operation of feudalism, from the beginning of the eleventh century to the opening years of the thirteenth.

At the outset, account must be taken of the fact that there is no full and connected depiction of character in any of the historical sources bearing on this age. The chronicles of the period deal primarily with events, and character appears only through the narration of deeds of action in the form of annals. Yet this is rather an advantage, for even were some historical figure described in the fullest detail, it would be unwarrantable to assume that such an individual was of necessity representative of the men of his age. A truer idea of the nature of man is to be reached through a composite constructed by means of an interpretation of the acts of many men, acts that are typical because, at least in the poetic material, they are repeated constantly in separate instances.

There are three historians whose works afford valuable testimony of the epoch of feudalism in which they lived: Ordericus Vitalis, to the west of the feudal territory delimited in the preceding chapter; Villehardouin, to the east of the same territory, and Mouskes to the north. Ordericus Vitalis (1077-1141), living in Normandy, was in direct touch with feudal France; and his chronicle, unlike the lifeless tabulation of events common to the period, evidences his active mind, awake to the critical value of the material he treated. Geoffroi de Villehardouin (*ca.* 1164-*ca.* 1219), of Champagne, was first of all a warrior, and afterwards a historian. His work breathes the life and energy that distinguished this author. Philippe de Mouskes (*ca.* 1215-1282), of Hainaut, although not feudal in time, is known to be a reliable source with regard to the feudal period. In addition to these historians, mention may be made of the verse history of Guillaume le Maréchal, regent of England from 1216 until his death in 1219. This last work is fairly accurate historically, but less penetrating than the other three in character depiction.

Paucity of details in delineation is a common failing of the period. Action was what interested the writers; instead of analysis they offered ordinarily a few stock descriptive phrases. The usual form of characterization of a man in *Guillaume le Maréchal* is the mention of a single trait, as where, for example, it is stated of the son of Henry II of England that "the young king was generous, as becomes a king's son."³ Mouskes, for his part, contents himself with saying that the warrior was valiant, wise, and courteous,⁴ while Villehardouin limits his analysis to saying, upon the demise of one of his fellow nobles (and on several other occasions), that his death was a great loss to Christianity.⁵

Ordericus is the only one of the four historians who comments in a distinctive way upon the different traits that marked a given man above the others of his entourage. So, for instance, he says of Geoffroi, son of Rotro, count of Mortagne (near Alençon) that he was generous, handsome and strong; that he had among his subjects warlike barons and brave governors of castles; that he gave his daughters in marriage to men of the rank of counts, from whom sprang a noble race of children, so that Geoffroi was famed not only for his valor and courage, but by reason of his wealth and alliances.⁶ Even in this description it is noteworthy how little is given directly of the actual traits of the count, and how much interest is displayed in the manner in which his character was manifested.

³ *L'histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, ed. Meyer, Paris, 1891-94, vv. 1967 ff. The passage refers to Henry, who in 1170 was nominally associated as king with his father, Henry II, and bore the title, although he did not live to succeed his father.

⁴ *Vaillans et sages et gentius; Chronique rimée de Philippe Mouskes*, ed. De Reiffenberg, II, Bruxelles 1838 (vol. I, 1836). Cf. vv. 15019, 15145, 15147, 15207, 15328-9, 15424-5, 15867-8, 16713, 19452.

⁵ *De la Conquête de Constantinople par Geoffroi de Villehardouin et Henri de Valenciennes*, ed. P. Paris, 1838, cxxv: *grant damages fu à la crestienté*. Cf. cxxx, and again clvii.

⁶ Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. Le Prevost, Paris, 1838-55, Liber VIII, chap. V, a. 1088: *Goisfredus . . . erat magnanimus, corpore pulcher et validus . . . ; strenuosque barones, et in bellis acres oppidanos suae ditioni subditos habebat. Filias quoque suas consularibus viris dedit in matrimonio . . . ex quibus orta est elegans sobolis generosae propago. Goisfredus itaque comes tot stemmatibus exornabatur, et armis animisque cum divitiis et amicis fulciebatur.*

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To the question, raised by this passage, of the part that military holdings and alliances by marriage had in determining the status of the individual, further attention will be paid later, in connection with the position of the feudal baron with respect to his *milieu*.

Like all histories of the period, the feudal poetry gives expression to no deliberate estimate of the nature of the feudal baron. But in another regard the poetry surpasses the history as a basis for the interpretation of medieval character. And this advantage of the poems over the chronicles lies in the greater freedom of treatment open to the poet. In the poetry, as in the historical documents, character must be searched out through action only. But whereas any single incident in history is of value primarily as indicative of the intimate qualities of the person concerned, and only indirectly as descriptive of the typical man of the age, the poetry on the contrary was born of the poet's composite idea of the men of his time, and was built out of many actual instances. And this delineation was not limited in expression by the necessity of following details of circumstance which rendered the history specific in application, in contrast with the poetry descriptions, comprehending as they did national traits in the narration of single episodes.⁷

By reason of the custom of referring to the French feudal poetry as *epic*, it is necessary to call attention to the fact that there is no epic idealization in any of the poems of the feudal group. The exception to be noted is the *Roland*, which is not strictly feudal, for between this single instance of the national epic and the rest of the provincial or feudal poetry there is a wide gap.⁸ Gautier, in his treatment of the later chivalry, failed to appreciate fully the earlier origin of this feudal poetry, and idealized the crude scenes of feudal life in keeping with his depiction of the Christian institution of Chivalry. For the feudal poetry rightly depicts just such an uncouth warrior, not

⁷ *National*, applied to France at this epoch, is approximately coincident with the territory delimited in the preceding chapter.

⁸ The Homeric epic, of course, is taken as the standard of judgment; it is characterized by its national quality. The feudal poetry, on the other hand, is provincial or sectional.

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far removed from the savage in the mode of his life, as might be expected of the age and environment of early feudalism. And if in the poetry instances are rare of the gentler side of man's nature, it is only due to the fact that the poems reflect what was actual in feudal conditions.⁹

II

The most evident trait of character of the feudal French noble as described in the epic poetry is a bravery bordering on insolence. This is illustrated with more than ordinary clearness in *Garin le Loherain*, a poem of the end of the twelfth century, but containing custom material of at least a century earlier. The passage of import in this connection relates how Begon, the brother of Garin le Loherain, besieged Naisil, the stronghold of Bernard. The poet tells that the garrison made sallies from time to time against the besieger, and in one of the ensuing mêlées Bernard was captured by Begon, who thereupon demanded the surrender of Naisil. Bernard assented and called upon his son to yield up the castle for him. And the son, Faucon, defiantly replied, with a sort of primitive humor: "You ask the surrender of the castle to no purpose, for if I had one foot in Paradise and the other in the castle of Naisil, I would withdraw the one from Paradise and put it back in Naisil!" And then Bernard, realizing that his son's words sealed the sentence of death upon him (Bernard), showed his careless valor in no doubtful wise. For he laughed outright, and then spoke without fear of consequences. "Surely," cried Bernard, "I know that you are my son, and that your mother has never sinned against me!" Begon, of course, flew into a rage, but eventually compromised, and the surrender of the castle was made on condition that the defenders might depart in peace.¹⁰

⁹ Apropos of the conditions of life at this time, the following verses are of import, showing the poet's realization of the comparatively short life of the man of that epoch (ca. 1225); *om sol viure joves cent anz, /aora n'es mais del terz menz.* Sordello, *Lensegnamen d'onor* (*Vita e Poesie di Sordello di Goito*, De Lollis, no. 40, vv. 134-5.)

¹⁰ *Garin*, I, pp. 232-233.

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This insolent courage was born of the universal reliance upon superior strength. Another aspect of this domination of the physical element in the feudal régime is the fact that the extent of the dependence of one fief upon another, and consequently of one man upon another, was in direct ratio to the psychical and moral strength of either man, if *moral* is taken in the sense of strength of character. Men did not wish, of course, to be subject to an overlord; they were compelled to this submission by reasons of expediency. And it was the constant effort of every individual to strengthen the bond of those holding of him, while at the same time asserting himself as independent as possible in regard to his superior. This struggle, and the measure of its success, is most easily observed in the case of the king and those barons holding directly of him, by reason of the greater faithfulness of the portrayal of these personages in history and in poetry.

The fearless independence of the greater barons towards the king is shown by an episode in the *Garin*, when Hervis came to the king to request aid against the Saracens, who were besieging his city of Metz. Hervis put his demand in unequivocal terms: "I come to you, Emperor, for it is your duty to guarantee the fief since I hold it of you." And when, being advised by Hardré, an enemy of the Loherain family, the king refused, the Duke Hervis went stark mad with rage. Then, after an eloquent speech, in which he reminded the king of the service he had aforesaid rendered his royal master, he angrily broke off his allegiance, declaring: "Since you fail me, I shall seek aid elsewhere. And I shall no longer hold my fief of you, nor so long as you live shall you ever have it again."¹¹ And from there he went to Anseis, king of Cologne, and offered to hold the fief of him in return for military aid.

This incident is also a pertinent example of the faithfulness of the poetry as a reflection of actual conditions. An exact counterpart is to be found in the Chronicle of Ordericus Vitalis. The historian relates that in the year 1090, Raoul II,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-55. Cf. *Aliscans*, 3056 ff.: *Et dist au rois; Vostre fief vous rendons!*

lord of Conches (in the present department of Eure), when his territory was laid waste by Count William of Evreux, went to the court of Duke Robert, of whom he held, and laying before him an account of the losses to which he was exposed by the aggressions of his neighbors, demanded the aid which he had a right to expect from his liege lord. But when his complaints proved fruitless and he obtained no redress, he turned his attention to another quarter, being compelled to seek a protector where he could. He therefore made application through his envoys to William II (Rufus), king of England, and promised the king the fealty of all his estates if he would lend him assistance. The king was highly pleased at the proposal, and promised aid adequate to his needs. Consequently he gave orders to his retainers in Normandy that they should render every assistance to Raoul, which they accordingly did.¹²

Somewhat later in the *Garin* the independence of the barons is even more pointedly set forth in brief concise form. The family of Fromont planned to fall upon the Loherains in the very court of the king, for, as the poet explains, "the king was young, and not one whit did they fear him."¹³ And the onslaught took place without the king's being able to prevent it.

Akin to this restive spirit of the feudal noble was his utter lack of self-restraint, manifesting itself in uncontrolled fits of wrath. The frequent resort to anger is an epic trait, common to the Iliad and the Odyssey, and to the French feudal poetry. But its depiction in the feudal poems is none the less a true

¹² Ordericus, Lib. VIII, cap. XIV, a. 1090. *Radulfus Rodbertum ducem adivit, querelas damnorum, quae a contribulibus suis pertulerat, intimavit, et herile adjutorium ab eo poposcit; sed frustra, quia nihil obtinuit. Hinc alias conversus est, et utile sibi patrocinium quaerere compulsus est. Regem Angliae per legatos suos interpellavit, eique sua infortunia mandavit, et si sibi suffragaretur, se et omnia sua promisit. His auditis rex gavisus est, et efficax adminiculum indigenti pollicitus est . . . tribunis et centurionibus, qui praeerant in Normannia familiis ejus, mandavit ut Radulfum totis adjuvarent nisibus, et oppida ejus munirent necessariis omnibus. Illi autem regis jussionibus alacriter obsecundaverunt.*

¹³ *Garin*, I, p. 129: *Li rois fu joenes, n'i ot point de raison, / Ne le doubterent vaillant un esperon.* Cf. the scene in *Aliscans* 2894 ff., when Guillaume stands in the king's presence with drawn sword.

portrayal of the early medieval nobleman in France, prone as he was to hot-headed, reckless action.¹⁴ The poem of *Garin* especially (including the *Mort Garin*), perhaps because of its nature more primitive than most of the feudal poetry, stands distinctly apart in this respect from the other poems of the feudal group. For the poem of *Garin* depends almost exclusively upon crude scenes of sudden wrath to strengthen and prolong the narrative.

According to the story, King Pepin had promised Blanchefflor in marriage to Garin. Fromont, whose family had been at feud with the Loherains for many years, attempted to persuade the king to change his decision, and to award to *him* the gift of the lady's hand. At the first word, Garin went white-hot with rage, but he choked his anger for the moment and made a soft voice belie the deadly menace of his words: "My lord Fromont, so help me God, if this morning when we two rode together through the woods of Val-Dormant, you had merely said that you found the lady to your liking, I would have given her to you, and her fief besides. But now I see your treachery, so that from me you will not have the amount of one single farthing." Fromont reddened with fury at the insult, and they would speedily have come to blows, except that the king parted them. And this small beginning was enough to cause a feud lasting a life-time, in which, as the poet says, "I know not how many knights were slain, and castles and cities brought to naught, and many were the children that were disinherited."¹⁵

Again in the *Garin* a passage occurs which relates a similar display of unbridled wrath when the day set for the marriage finally arrived, and when Garin and Blanchefflor stood before the altar as the priest proclaimed the bans. Suddenly a monk arose, and forhade the marriage on the basis of consanguinity.¹⁶

¹⁴ Cf. Jusserand, J. J., *Les Sports et Jeux d'exercice dans l'ancienne France*, Paris, 1901, pp. 33-35.

¹⁵ *Garin*, I, pp. 124-126.

¹⁶ Consanguinity was frequently invoked at that time as an excuse for divorce, and for the prevention of marriage for political purposes. For an instance of the sort cf. *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium*, a. 1116 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, XXIII, 821): *Cum Henricus rex Anglie quandam filiam suam cuidam nobili . . . vellet dare, idem Yvo matrimonium illud dissuadendo consanguinitatem in sexto gradu computavit.*

Whereupon Begon, the brother of Garin, sprang to his feet in sudden anger and struck the monk to the ground. And when the king, who did not relish this insult to his authority, ventured to protest, Begon shouted angrily: "This is no monk, he is a perjurer and liar! By the body of Saint Martin, if I get him outside this palace, I tell you solemnly that no man on earth can assure him that I will not slay him."¹⁷ And it was some little while before Begon could be induced to desist, for a time at least, from the immediate execution of his purpose.

Still one other passage from the same poem shows the extent of lawlessness to which such yielding to sudden passion often led. Upon this occasion the king's messenger came to Fromont with an unwelcome demand. Now in so far as anything was held sacred in those times, a messenger, or envoy, was considered inviolable during his mission. But Fromont was displeased with the message, and grasping a knife he struck at the envoy, and missing him, slew a young man who stood near. Then Fromont reached for another knife and would have made a second attempt had not the messenger escaped by the aid of one of the other barons.¹⁸

Nor is such reasonless anger lacking in the records of history. Ordericus relates in his account of the sack of Rome by Robert Guiscard in 1084 that when the troops of Robert entered Rome, they set fire to the city by the order of their furious Duke.¹⁹ Again the same historian tells that when William the Conqueror took Mantes in 1087, his men in their fury set fire to the castle, which was consumed, together with the churches and houses, and two nuns also perished in the

¹⁷ *Garin*, II, pp. 9-10.

¹⁸ *Garin*, I, pp. 213-214. Cf. fate of the messengers in the *Quatre Fils Aymon*, 245 ff.; and 610 ff. Cf. also the treatment of the envoys by *Richard Cœur de Lion*, *infra*, p. 39. The chess-board quarrels related in various feudal poems deserve mention as a traditional cause of wars; cf. *Quatre Fils Aymon*, 1910 ff., and *Chevalerie Ogier de Danemarque*, ed. Barrois, J., Paris, 1842, vv. 3155 ff.

¹⁹ Ordericus, lib. VII, cap. VII, a. 1084: *Deinde victores, civibus mixti fugientibus, urbem intraverunt, jussuque fervidi ducis ignem tectis injecerunt.*

flames.²⁰ In *Guillaume le Maréchal* a story is told of Richard Cœur de Lion, at the time when towards the end of his life he was waging war with the king of France.²¹ French envoys arrived for a peace parley, and arrangements had practically been completed for a five-year truce, when one of the envoys ventured to request of Richard the release of the Bishop of Beauvais, who had been taken prisoner a few days before. Thereupon Richard became speechless with rage and broke off the negotiations, and so great was his wrath that the French considered themselves fortunate to escape with their lives.²²

An instance from Mouskes is so relevant and so true to the period that it is not to be passed over without mention. Mouskes began his chronicle with the mythological origin of France, and continued it to the year 1243. The work is of little value until the eleventh century, and even then it is not always trustworthy in the minutiae of historical events. But Mouskes was particularly interested in the feudal period, and his account of that epoch is of the highest value in that it portrays incidents in accordance with feudal custom. So the spirit of the following episode may be taken as characteristic, whether or not it occurred exactly as the historian relates it. William the Conqueror, he says,²³ at this time Duke of Normandy (ca. 1054), requested Count Bauduin of Flanders for the hand of his daughter, whereat the Count was highly pleased, and gave his consent. But when she was informed of the match by her father, she declared that she preferred the seclusion of a convent to marriage with a bastard. The Count, her father, of course was angry, but not so enraged as was Duke William when the matter was recounted to him. The Duke went forthwith into the lady's presence, and kicked and beat her wellnigh to death. Now the remarkable fact is that the father was not

²⁰ *Ibid.*, lib. VII, cap. XIV, a. 1087: *Irruens itaque exercitus regis cum oppidanis portas pertransiit, et per rabiem armigerorum immisso igne castrum cum ecclesiis et aedibus combussit.* Cf. also note of editor.

²¹ Anno 1199, the year in which Richard died.

²² *Guillaume le Maréchal*, 11576 ff.

²³ *Mouskes*, 16900 ff.

offended, nor is Mouskes conscious of anything out of the ordinary. Quite the contrary is true, for in the next breath Mouskes continues:

Cis Guillaumes fu moult preudom
Del commencement jusqu'a[1] som.²⁴

Such a burst of anger was not so uncommon as to excite attention. The final word is said when the lady declares that she would now truly like to marry the Duke, for until he beat her she had not realized what a valiant man he was!²⁵

The poetry, too, reflects this brutality as exhibited even towards women; in *Garin le Loherain* a scene similar to the preceding ensued when the queen rebuked the king because he had deserted his friends for the sake of a paltry bribe. Whereupon the king became very petulant, and raising his glove, struck her across the face.²⁶

Such scenes both in history and poetry are frequent, but the case is not always one of untempered savagery; it was rather that the man was governed by impulse, without the intervention of sane consideration or consciousness of any law until after the deed was done. Describing a scene like the above in *Auberi le Bourgoing*, when Auberi had struck his daughter-in-law so fiercely that the blood flowed down, the poet adds that a few seconds later Auberi was grieved within his heart for having struck her.²⁷

Quick to anger the feudal noble certainly was, and brutal in the manifestation of his wrath. But the same impulsiveness that was at the bottom of such displays of temper resulted in a repentance that sometimes followed fast upon the misdeed. This has been partially exemplified by the preceding incident from the *Auberi*, and is very clearly illustrated by the *Raoul de*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 16992-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17328 ff: *J'el prendroie ore, s'il voloit, / Quar jou sai bien que moult valoit / Li dus, ki çaiens me vint battre.*

²⁶ *Mort Garin*, p. 103. Cf. *Mouskes*, a. 1150 ca., vv. 16682-87: *Guillaumes Talevas* [younger son of Guillaume de Bellême] *fu preus / Mais trop estoit fel et crueus, / Quar il fist, à l'aviesprer, / Heudebours, sa fame, estranler, / Pour çou qu'ele li reprouvoit / Les cruautés que il faisoit.*

²⁷ *Auberi*, ed. Tarbé, p. 66.

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Cambrai. In the latter poem it is related that when Raoul discovered that his men had disobeyed his command to pitch his tent in the court of the convent of Origny, Raoul was bitterly incensed at his retainers and broke into a tirade of violent threats. Then Guerri, Raoul's uncle, answered somewhat impatiently, setting forth in sharp manner the good reasons why Raoul's instructions had not been followed. And Raoul, his wrath vanishing as quickly as it had burst out, replied: "Have it as you say; leave it so since you wish it."²⁸

The most pertinent instance, showing at once the extremes of wrath and repentance, is to be found in another passage of the same poem. It was when Raoul, having burned the convent, boasted how utterly he intended to crush the sons of Herbert, the kinsmen of his esquire Bernier. Bernier ventured to say a word in their behalf, and when Raoul heard him he began to curse Bernier roundly and to accuse him of treason,²⁹ and ended with the taunt: "Save for contempt of you I would strike off all your limbs. Who is it that keeps me from crushing you on the spot!"³⁰ And Bernier replied hotly: "Though I see you so insolent, you would not dare strike me for any consideration!" Then Raoul strode up to Bernier and dealt him such a blow that the blood flowed down and stained his ermine cloak.³¹

Bernier, of course, was insanely enraged, and renounced his allegiance to Raoul. And at once Raoul regretted his deed. So "he knelt down, and by reason of his great love he spoke eloquently: 'Bernier, harden not thyself against me. Wilt thou not take a fair amend? Not that I fear at all thy anger, but that I would be thy friend.'" In all humility Raoul pleads, "Bernier, my brother, thy valor is not questioned; grant me peace, and put aside thy ill-feeling."³²

²⁸ *Raoul de Cambrai*, 1262-1284. Cf. the account of a similar fit of rage related by Ordericus of William Rufus, and his sudden calming at the well-chosen words of the barons of his retinue: Ordericus, lib. VIII, cap. II, a. 1088: *His auditis rex iratus est, et valde rigidus intumuit*, etc.

²⁹ *Raoul de Cambrai*, 1652-1656.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1700-1702.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1710-1718.

³² *Ibid.*, 1756-1762, and 1780-1782.

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Although the feudal noble was cruel and relentless when in the position of advantage, and was recklessly brave in the heat of battle, it is shown in the poetry that he did not maintain a heroic level. The depiction of the weaker side of strong men distinguishes the French feudal poetry from the Greek epic, and that fact offers further evidence of the faithfulness of the portrayal of life in the feudal poems. In the *Raoul de Cambrai* occurs a notable example of the reversal of character on the part of a brave warrior. It is in the description of the great battle between Raoul and the sons of Herbert, when Ernaut of Douai, after fighting valiantly against Raoul, lost his hand by a sword-stroke. At once his vaunted bravery melted away and the weakness of the man contrasted with his hitherto valorous conduct, and he begged piteously for his life: "Mercy, Raoul, for God's sake have pity! If you are angered for that I have smitten you, I will be your man in whatsoever fashion you will. Have pity, Raoul, if it be in you! I am a young man and wish not to die yet. I will be a monk—willingly will I serve God. All my fiefs I give to you to hold."⁸⁸

In the *Auberi*, a poem rich in descriptive material, and less limited than is usual by the convention of verse, is a well-developed instance of this character trait. The story goes that the robber Lambert in friendly manner had induced Auberi to visit him, but with the treacherous intent of forcing Auberi to bestow upon him in marriage Sonneheut, Auberi's daughter-in-law. Lambert set about accomplishing his purpose by first getting Auberi royally drunk, and when he had reached an unconscious state Lambert put him to bed in the same room with his (Lambert's) niece. In the morning Lambert awakened his guest with a savage blow, and accusing him of having violated his niece, threatened to kill him. When Auberi heard him, the color left his face and he was afraid, and his words came in broken speech. Vainly did he deny the charge;

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2880-2884, and 3011-3014: *Merci! R., por Dieu q' tot cria. / Vos hom serai ensi con vos plaira. / Qite vos clain tot Braibant et Hainau, / Qe ja mes oirs demi pié n'en tendra . . . / Merci! R., se le poez souffrir. / Jovenes hom sui, ne vuel encor morir. / Moines serai, si volrai Dieu servir. / Cuites te claim mes onnors a tenir.*

Lambert only threatened the more, and brandished his naked sword, making pretense of striking Auberi. And Auberi, for the fear of death that he had, promised to give Sonneheut to Lambert, and swore this on the sacred relics.⁸⁴ This act of cowardice, so utterly contemptible from the modern point of view, does not receive any condemnation in the poem. There is no intimation of any consciousness on the part of the poet that Auberi had failed to maintain his honor.

The absence of the conception of honor as it exists today is not peculiar to this one poem. It is equally true of the whole feudal group, especially of those reflecting the customs of feudalism in its earliest stages. The word *honor* is to be found of course in the poetry, but there was no jot of the modern conception of the term attaching to *honor* at that time, and the sentiment itself can scarcely be said to have existed. Of the meanings denoted by the word in feudal society, the first and most frequent is that of an office or the fief attaching thereto. In addition, certain abstract connotations of the word existed. In the *Quatre Fils Aymon*, for example, *honor* denotes glory, renown, respect.⁸⁵ Various other words and phrases in certain contexts admit the translation *honor* in the modern sense of moral and ethical obligation, but at closer view such instances invariably resolve into a more material consideration.⁸⁶

If any idea whatsoever existed of honor as in the best usage of the present day, it was as regards those customs of

⁸⁴ *Auberi*, ed. Tarbé, pp. 80-83. That submission to superior strength was not condemned is evidenced by the following lines from the *Aliscans*, vv. 626-7: *Se plus demeure por fol se puet tenir, / Quant por un cop en va requellir cinq*, etc.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Quatre Fils Aymon*, 1118: *Mais voist en aventure pour honor conquerer*. And *ibid.*, 6831-2: *Mieux vaut mors a honor que vivre a deshonor. Qui en fuint morra, ja n'ait s'ame pardon*. Also *Mort Garin*, p. 29. Cf. also *Quatre Fils Aymon*, v. 466, and *Guillaume le maréchal*, 2089 and 2052.

⁸⁶ *Faites le bien* is a case of the sort: the phrase means merely *do the advantageous thing*, or sometimes, *do what is customary*: cf. *Mort Garin*, p. 73, v. 4; *Garin*, I, p. 61, v. 7; I, p. 89, v. 11; I, p. 218, v. 1; II, p. 182, v. 11. Probably nothing more than valor in war is meant by the pompous declaration: *Onques nostre linages ne fist jor se bien non*. (*Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins*, LXVII, Stuttgart, 1862, *Renaut de Montauban*, ed. Michelant, p. 182, v. 5.)

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procedure involved in the feudal relation of *homme-to-seigneur*, and vice versa. This relationship is discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters, and there is to be mentioned at present only a single historical example illustrating from the point of view of character analysis the possible obligations of the relationship.⁸⁷

In the year 1118, Henry I of England was requested by Eustace de Breteuil to restore to him the castle of Ivry, which had belonged to his predecessors. Henry temporized, but in order to keep Eustace's allegiance gave to him as hostage the son of Ralph-Harenc who had the custody of the fortress; and in turn Henry took as hostages the two daughters of Eustace, who were his own grand-daughters. Eustace, excited by Amauri de Montfort, who strove to renew the quarrel, put out the boy's eyes, and in that condition sent him back to his father. Upon this the father went to the king in a rage, and made known to him the cruel treatment his son had received. Henry then delivered up his two grand-daughters whom he held in hostage of Eustace, that the father might immediately wreak his vengeance upon them. Accordingly, Ralph-Harenc, with the permission of the king, seized Eustace's daughters, and tore out their eyes and cut off the tips of their noses, in retaliation for the cruelty inflicted upon his son by their father.⁸⁸

As might be inferred from the absence of all idea of honor, the religious tendencies of the feudal noble reached no very high stage of development. True conscientious appreciation

⁸⁷ An idea of honor inhered partially in customs concerning the conduct of war. Thus at times *safe-conduct* would seem sacred; cf. *Garin*, I, p. 69: *Buegons apèle le vassal Amauri /Dites Richard viègne parler à mi, /Il n'aura garde, loiaument li affi.* And Richard comes without fear of his enemy, and departs in safety. But such was not always the case: cf. the death of Beuves d'Aigremont (*Quatre Fils Aymon*), and in the same poem, Charlemagne's plot against the four sons of Aymon. At best it was a question of the observance of custom rather than scrupulous conduct.

⁸⁸ Ordericus, lib. XII, cap. X, a. 1119: *In eodem anno, Eustachius de Britolio, gener regis, crebro commonitus fuit a contribulibus et consanguineis ut a rege recederet, nisi ipse turrim Ibreii, quae antecessorum ejus fuerat, ei redderet, etc.*

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of religious principles was foreign to the age; its place was usurped by formality and superstition.³⁹

The formal nature of the influence of the Church is well illustrated by an episode from the *Raoul de Cambrai*. Raoul had just burned the convent of Origny, where a hundred nuns perished in the conflagration. His retinue had made no protest, excepting Bernier, whose mother was one of those that suffered death as a consequence of Raoul's barbarity. But when at the close of the day Raoul ordered a sumptuous feast to be prepared—roasted peacocks, peppered swans, and venison in rich abundance—the steward felt constrained to rebuke his master:

"In God's name, what outrage do you intend? You are forswearing Christianity and its sacraments! It is Lent, when one ought to fast in memory of the sacred covenant for which sinners adore the cross. And we wretches who have sinned today will never find peace with God unless his compassion overcomes our impiety." And Raoul replied: "Fool, why speak to me of that? This day's deed was but a consequence of the ill treatment the people of Origny committed against my esquires, and they have rightly paid the penalty. But indeed, I had forgotten it was Lent."⁴⁰ Thus Raoul, defending himself on the score of massacring a hundred nuns, admitted that he was at fault in that he had not observed the formalities of a Lenten day.

Aside from this perfunctory consideration of Church form-

³⁹ A story such as that told of Henry IV, Emperor of Germany, is typical of the feeble hold of the Church upon the more powerful nobles. Ordericus (lib. VII, cap. IV, a. 1081) relates that Henry, having been excommunicated by Pope Gregory VII, laid siege to Rome, and: *Inquirentibus vero, cur tam horrenda contra caput Ecclesiae praesumpserat, hanc tantae discordiae causam inter se et Papam esse, cum cachinno asserebat, quod medicus aegrotum nimis acriter curare impotentem nisus fuerat*. In similar nature, the chronicle of Ordericus contains examples of the high value attached to relics, and the unscrupulous means employed for obtaining things deemed so holy. Cf. the story of the method used to obtain relics: lib. VII, cap. XII, a. 1087: *Volumus hinc sanctum corpus tollere, nostramque ad patriam transportare*, etc.

⁴⁰ *Raoul de Cambrai*, 1560-1582. The formality and the thinness of the veneer of religion is exemplified by the account of Foulques d'Anjou, in Raoul Glaber, *Libri Quinque*, lib. II, cap. iv.

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alities, a second phase of religion that prevailed widely in the Middle Ages was superstition.⁴¹ The most common form of superstition is premonition, an anticipation or warning in some fashion or other, of events in the future. The *Garin* yields a pertinent example. The family of the Loherains were at peace for a brief space between the ever-recurring feuds. Garin is depicted in conversation with his wife: "May Saint Mary guard me and all my friends," said Garin. "My heart fails me, I am altogether bewildered. It seems that the heavens should thunder. Shield me, O God, from evil." "Good sir," said the lady Aélis, "make the sign of the cross upon your face that naught evil may come upon you." And Garin replied, "So be it, lady." And he raised his hand to cross himself. And at that moment there appeared in the distance horsemen approaching slowly. And when they were come near, they dismounted, and Garin saw that they bore the dead body of Begon, his brother, than whom he loved no one more dearly.⁴²

The clearest expression of this intermingling of religion and superstition in the poetry is the first half of the *Raoul de Cambrai*, comprising the whole story of the life of Raoul. The recitation is an echo of the doctrine of the ever-present hand of God in the life of men, but in its actual form was far more a matter of superstition than of religion. The first three thousand lines of this poem, relating the downfall of Raoul, may be divided into three parts, each representing a distinct step forward in the ill-fated career of Raoul.

The first of these stages in the narration is reached at the point when Raoul was preparing to invade the Vermandois.

⁴¹ The question of magic deserves mention apropos of superstition. *Maugis the Robber*, which is a minor theme of the *Quatre Fils Aymon*, is the best instance from the poetry. Cf. in Mouskes the legend of Gerbert's transaction with the devil, told in good faith as history. De Reiffenberg's note to the passage is pertinent: *Chronique rimée*, 15442ff. Also the story of Berengarius, in *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium*, in *MGH, SS, XXIII*, p. 789, line 25 ff. The credulity of the age is most shown in Raoul Glaber: cf. the story of St. Brendan incorporated into his history, *Libri Quinque*, lib. II, cap. II.

⁴² *Garin*, II, p. 261. Cf. the instance of premonition by a dream in Ordericus, lib. VIII, cap. xiv, a. 1090: *Nuper vidi somnium, quo valde territus sum*, etc. Cf. the story of Wlferius, Raoul Glaber, *Libri Quinque*, lib. II cap. IX.

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His mother, after having tried in vain to dissuade him, said: "Since for my sake you will not abandon your plan, may almighty God never bring you back safe nor sound nor well!" And by reason of this curse, the poet adds, Raoul suffered such affliction, that he lost his life thereby.⁴³

The next period culminates in Raoul's command to his retinue: "Barons, set fire to the village of Origny⁴⁴—an act of impiety that was the first consequence of the mother's curse.

The final stage in Raoul's undoing came when Raoul blasphemed God and his saints. It was when he had conquered Ernaut in battle, and Ernaut begged that his life be spared. Raoul then denied him mercy, with the oath "Neither earth nor grass can save you, nor God nor man can aid you, nor all the saints who serve God!"⁴⁵ That oath sealed his fate, for by it he denied God. And Ernaut was conscious of the import of the moment, for he raised his head, and courage came back to him, and he defied Raoul fearlessly, because Raoul had renounced God and his compassion.⁴⁶ And with that Bernier came up and engaged Raoul, and slew him.

III

In subsequent chapters of this study is discussed the social and political status of the feudal noble. In the present survey of the feudal noble as an individual, only those factors are to be considered which determined in the case of each baron just how high he should stand in the hierarchic society of his day. And it was a single element that settled inevitably the position of every noble. This element was superior strength in one or another of its phases: not only physical strength of the individual, but, of far greater importance, the military strength of his fiefs, and of those of his kin.

The importance of strength of body enters into many of the examples that have been adduced in another connection.

⁴³ *Raoul de Cambrai*, 1131-1135.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1553.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3017-19: For form of oath incident to earth and grass, cf. *infra*, chap. IV, p. 64, note 28.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3015-3031.

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The successful man in the feudal régime was the one who, as the poet of *Raoul de Cambrai* says of Bernier, "was large and powerful when he attained the age of manhood,"⁴⁷ that he might without fear stand before a great warrior, as Bernier did before Raoul, and say: "You dare not strike me!"⁴⁸ Or as Garin said to another noble in the king's court, "You have lied, sir! In the whole of France there is not a man so redoubtable that if he insulted me I would not make him take back his words ere noonday."⁴⁹

Of greatest importance as a factor in the position of the feudal man was the strength represented in the number and greatness of his kinsmen; upon them he relied with even greater assurance than upon even his liege-men. Witness the summons of Begon when he was hard-pressed by his enemies: "Tell my brother, Garin the Loherain, that he aid me, and give my thanks to him; also go to Thieri who is my uncle and so ought not to fail me; nor forget Girard de Liège, and Garnier, and Hugo of Cambrai. And return by way of Ouri the German, and Auberi le Bourgoing. And tell my sister to send me her son and her nephews."⁵⁰ And when this family array masses its armies, they make hill and valley resound, and from all sides their columns guard every approach by road.⁵¹

The far-reaching bond of kinship was an asset of political value. In the *Garin* is related how the Bishop Henry of Reims availed himself of such an argument in order to dissuade the king from his purpose of giving the lady Blancheflor to Garin: "If Garin has her," said the bishop, "you will see France shamed, for never will Fromont serve you nor will his

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 382.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1711.

⁴⁹ *Garin*, II, p. 25. The essential nature of the physical element is evident in the descriptions given by poets and historians of the great feudal barons: cf. *La Chevalerie Ogier de Danemarque*, 6065 ff; *Aliscans*, 2740 ff; *Auberi*, ed. Tobler, p. 28; *Guillaume le Maréchal*, 1800 ff; *Ordericus*, lib. VIII, cap. v, a. 1088, *Erat . . . corpore magnus et fortis, audax et potens in armis . . . etc.*; *ibid.*, lib. VIII, cap. v, a. 1088, *Gaisfredus . . . erat corpore pulcher et validus . . . etc.*

⁵⁰ *Garin*, II, p. 102.

⁵¹ *Mort Garin*, pp. 25-26: cf. *ibid.*, p. 9, and p. 30; also *Garin*, II, p. 127.

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powerful family (*mervillous lin*). And war will never come to an end."⁵²

With the exception of the tie between lord and man resulting from land consideration, this blood-relationship was the strongest reason for the mutual support of men at this time when discord rather than order was the rule. The instruction given by the queen to a newly dubbed knight expresses at any rate the accepted conception of the noble class: *Love your kinsmen, hate your enemies*.⁵³ In the *Mort Garin*, when Auberi's faithfulness to his kin is questioned, he cries indignantly: "Think you, if ever mine own friends bound to me by ties of blood come in need to me, that I will deny them my bread and wine, or my castles and my cities?"⁵⁴ When Garin issues *desfiance* for himself, he includes his friends in the same breath:⁵⁵ "Henceforth you are defied of me; guard yourself from all my kin!"⁵⁶

How compelling was the obligation involved in kinship is most pointedly set forth in the following final example. In this passage, too, is evident something of the inner nature of the tie resultant from blood-relationship. For it was not necessarily a natural affection for one's family that was at the base of the alliance, but sometimes, as in the following instance, it was merely an inevitable obligation met because neither party dared, by refusing the other assistance, deny himself the same aid that would be rendered him in like need. In brief, the bond was one of political necessity. As the story

⁵² *Garin*, II, pp. 1-2: *Né ses parages né son mervillous lin*: variant of MS. St. Germ. 2041, *Garin*, II, 2, note 1. Cf. Mouskes, 16902-4: Duke William of Normandy plans to marry (a. 1154 ca); *Lors se volt li dus marier, /Pour ses amis emparentier, /Et pour soi mesmes enforcier*. And in *Guillaume le Maréchal*, 2259, it is related that the young king ceased to fight when he had no *boen ami charnel*. Cf. also Ordericus, lib. VII, cap. x, a. 1083: *Erat enim nobilitate clarus, etc.* Also *ibid.*, lib. VIII, cap. ix, a. 1089: *Tunc Rodbertus dux contra tot hostes repagulum paravit, filiamque suam, quam de pellice habuerat . . . conjugem dedit . . . etc.* Cf. *supra*, p. 32, note 6, emphasis upon kinship.

⁵³ *Mort Garin*, p. 84: *Amez les vos, haex vos anemis*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

⁵⁵ For the connotation of *desfiance*, cf. *infra*, chap. v, p. 89.

⁵⁶ *Mort Garin*, p. 14.

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runs in the *Garin*, a certain Droés, fearing the enmity of Garin, and desiring to attach to himself a strong ally, married the sister of Bauduin. Bauduin consented, unaware of the hostility of Garin against Droés. And when, after the marriage, Bauduin learned the truth he had great fear, and for a space he was silent. Then he grew red with rage, and said: "Droés d'Amiens, you have deceived me. If you had told me before this, the marriage would never have taken place. But I know well that blood cannot be false, for he who cuts off his nose spares not his face. Wherefore it befits me to endure great pain, and together with you to maintain the war against Garin."⁵⁷

The composite features given in the preceding pages are the result of an attempt to set forth the salient traits of character of a nobleman living in Northern France in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The effort has not been to give a classification of separate items in list form, but to make an analysis of a few typical traits that form a basis for the interpretation of the character of the feudal baron. This man was marked by the ease with which his cruder passions found expression, and by his lack of the finer qualities, those of honor and religious scruple. It has been shown that he was the natural product of the institution of feudalism, and his inner qualities are no less explained by feudalism than the course of feudalism was determined by the nature of the man. That he was not Christian in action is obvious; Feudalism, in contrast with Chivalry, was of non-Christian origin. It has been observed during this discussion how the intimate traits of this feudal noble are to be traced only through the interpretation of his acts as recorded in historical sources and in the feudal poetry. The histories fail unaided to delineate sharply personal characteristics. They serve, however, to confirm the more

⁵⁷ *Garin*, I, p. 160: *Li Flamens (Bauduins) l'oit, tout en fut esbahis, /Une grant piece ala que mot ne dist. /Com il parole, de mautalent rougit: /Droés d'Amiens, dist-il, tu m'as trai: /Se autretant voire m'eusses dit/ . . . Li mariages ne poist avenir. /Mais je sais bien que cuer ne puet mentir, /Qui son né coupe il deserte son vis. /Ains me convient les grans poines sofrir: /Ensanble o vous la guerre maintenir.*

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general descriptions of the poetry. And the comparison of the two, history and poetry, reveals with precision that whereas the poetry is of little or no value as a source of events in the nature of annals, the poetry is of higher value than even the chronicles and other strictly historical works of the period, as a reliable source for the analysis of character.

fulfilled various offices incident to the royal household, and were also employed as *missi regis*, i.e., representatives of the king entrusted with matters of civil and criminal procedure throughout the realm, notably with the duties of ambassador, and inspector of conditions in distant districts.⁶ The exact extent of their privileges cannot be determined,⁷ but the distinction accorded to them is evidenced by the fact that the murder indemnity, or *Wergild*, exacted for the death of any of their group was triple the amount demanded in the case of an ordinary Frank.⁸

II

A still more important recognition of the character of the *antrustions* is to be found in the benefice, which owes its first development to the exigencies arising out of the status of this privileged class.

A gradual change, far-reaching in result, had been infiltrated into the life of these Germanic tribes as a consequence of their definitive establishment in France. Prior to the occupation of Gaul the Franks had been a nomadic people, securing a livelihood in the pursuits of hunting and warfare. They came into France without any experience of the value of land in itself. Once settled there, they were confronted by a totally new and different state of affairs: their previous occupations in warfare

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. cited *supra*.

⁷ The Salic law provided that an *antrustion* need not testify against a fellow *antrustion*. *Lex Salica*, ed. Holder, Leipzig, 1880, p. 80, tit. LXXVI, sec. 3: *Si antrustio contra antrustionem testimonium iurauerit, sol. XV. culpabi. indicetur*. Towards the end of the Merovingian dynasty, the *antrustions* had become a privileged class of landowners: cf. Brunner, *Rechtsgeschichte*, II, pp. 258 ff.

⁸ Of real import in this connection is the formula for the acceptance, by the king, of an *antrustion* in the seventh century, which is as follows: *Rectum est ut qui nobis fidem pollicentur inlesam nostram tueantur auxilio. Et quia ille fidelis, Deo propitio, noster, veniens ibi in palatio nostro una cum arma sua, in manu nostra trustem et fidelitatem nobis visus est coniurasse, propterea per praesentem praeceptum decernimus ac iubemus ut deinceps memoratus ille inter numero antrustionorum computetur. Et si quis fortasse eum interficere praesumpserit, noverit se virgildo suo solidis DC esse culpabilem indicetur*. E. de Rozière, *Recueil des Formules du V^e au X^e siècle*, I, p. 3, no. VIII, Paris, 1859.

and as hunters were not by themselves a sufficient means of existence. The king no longer had at his disposal the spoils of war to divide among his followers as a means of assuring their faithfulness to himself. Since no taxes were levied,⁹ the sole wealth of the crown lay in the territory acquired. And it was in the distribution of this land that the reward of service must be found.

As a result of these increasingly prevalent conditions, the king's gift of horse or armor to his *antrustions* was replaced by grants of tracts of land, known as benefices, in return for which his servants might support and equip themselves for service entailed in warfare. At the first, these benefices were intended to be revocable at the will of the king: they were not stipulated for more than the life-time of the holder. However, the *antrustion* holding a benefice found himself immediately more vitally involved in the welfare of his lord than before the advent of this institution. He still had, indeed, the right to forego the king's service, but he was required to make formal request for release therefrom—an appeal, nevertheless, that the king was expected to meet with favor. In such cases, the *antrustion* surrendered the benefice, just as under former conditions he had given back the armor received as a gift from his chieftain. The beneficiaries also acknowledged a more specific jurisdiction of the king. They could not, without the royal permission, change from the state of laic to that of cleric,¹⁰ nor contract marriage, either for themselves or for their children.¹¹

⁹ Under the Merovingian kings the system of taxation established by the Romans gradually fell into disuse. Cf. Pfister, *Gaul under the Merovingian Franks. Institutions.* (Cambridge Medieval History, II, chap. V, p. 139, ed. H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney, New York, 1913.)

¹⁰ Ca. 627. Cf. *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed. Bouquet, III, VI, 562: *Et quia praefatus vir Domini in ejus aula nutritus, et suis fuerat olim ministeriis adscitus, nitebatur ei consultu suorum molestiam inferre, pro eo quod sine ejus permissu habitum mutasset, ac monasticae se Religioni mancipasset.*

¹¹ For stipulations as to marriage ca. 622, cf. *ibid.*, 606, n. 9, *Ex vita S. Salabergae: Metuens autem praefatus Gundoinus ne ob filiam iram Regis saevitiam incurreret, eam à calle, quod ire sponte decreverat, pedetentim retraxit . . . Mox praedictam Salabergam non ejus sponte*

In this epoch during which the man became more subject to the king, there was a tendency on the part of the ruler to refrain from arbitrarily withdrawing the benefice from the man who held of him. The trend in this direction is first indicated by the *Thirty Year Provision*, granted by Chlotaire I in the year 560, whereby the king agreed not to withdraw any estate that had been held by one man for thirty years.¹² This movement to strengthen the rights of the proprietor was confirmed in the *Treaty of Andelys* in 587,¹³ and again by the *Ordinance of Paris* in 614.¹⁴

As soon as it was definitely understood that the benefice was tenable for life, there naturally followed an effort on the part of the beneficiary to render his holding hereditary. This was gradually brought about, in one or another of four ways. 1. A custom arose by which a beneficiary during his lifetime sought to assure to his heir the unbroken tenure of the paternal office and of the benefice attaching thereto;¹⁵ the son was formally introduced at court, was associated with the father in the fulfillment of the latter's duties, and made every effort to succeed the father at his death.

2. The king sometimes guaranteed to a favored official that

... regio tamen jussu et ob liberorum procreandorum causam, praedictus vir ad suum adscivit conjugium. Cf. also *ibid.*, 615, *Ex vita S. Anstrudis*, and *ibid.*, 621, *Ex vita S. Berthae*. Cf. also Brunner, *Rechtsgeschichte*, II, p. 268.

¹² *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges*, I, sec. 13, p. 3. Chlotharii I, regis constitutio: Quicquid ecclesia, clerici, vel provinciales nostri, intercedente tamen justo possessionis initio, per triginta annos inconcusso jure possedissee probantur, in eorum ditione res possessa permaneat; nec actio tantis aevi spatiis sepulta ulterius contra legum ordinem sub aliqua repetitione consurgat, possessione in possessoris iure sine dubio permanente.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6. Guntchrami et Childeberti regum pactum: Similiter quicquid antefati reges ecclesiis aut fidelibus suis contulerunt, aut adhuc conferre cum iustitia, Deo propitiante, voluerint, stabiliter conservetur.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, sec. 16, p. 15. Clotharii II Edictum anni 614: Quicquid parentes nostri aut anteriores principes vel nos per iustitiam visi sumus concessisse et confirmasse, in omnibus debeat confirmari.

¹⁵ Under the Merovingians, women were not permitted to hold a benefice, by reason of the military service incident thereto. Cf. Pfister, *Gaul under the Merovingian Franks. Institutions*. (Cambridge Medieval History, II, chap. v, p. 133.)

his heir should succeed to the function (honor) and also to the benefice of the father.

3. During the decline of the Merovingians, still a third factor became effective. Officials of great power and prestige deliberately usurped the privilege of making their holdings hereditary.

4. The ultimate factor in this movement was the conversion of allodial lands into benefices. From Roman times there had existed proprietors who held, independently of any suzerain, landed possessions which were regularly handed down from father to son. In the anarchy that accompanied the decline of the Merovingian power, it became increasingly difficult for a small landowner to maintain himself in a state of unprotected isolation, and he saw himself compelled to surrender his patrimonial lands to the king, and receiving them back again from this overlord, to hold them of him in the nature of a benefice.

These allodial lands having been originally hereditary, and becoming converted into benefices with the opportunity for express agreement, continued for the most part hereditary, and by their nature superinduced a similar development in the case of other benefices. By the middle of the seventh century this trend was fairly well established, although the principle of hereditary succession cannot be said to have yet become fixed, since the hereditary character was still subject to exceptional concession, and was not applied by general rule.

Thus it may be seen that from the era of the Frankish occupation of Gaul, there existed a personal relationship of *homme-à-seigneur* constantly increasing in strength, and emphasizing above all the bond between individuals associated through the obligations of fidelity and devotion. In this intercourse land played a secondary role, and "le premier rempart de l'autorité était la foi promise et la foi reçue."¹⁶

¹⁶ Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, Book XXXI, chap. xx, p. 518, in the *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. Parelle, Paris, 1877.

III

Under the Roman empire there had existed a relationship of inferior to superior through the bond of *patrocinium*, a term summing up the two phases of the relationship: 1. the protection given by a powerful to a weaker individual; 2. the authority of the protector over the protected. This same institution existed among the Gauls. Arising, as it did, out of the destitution and necessity of the client or one protected, it amounted to little less than slavery. Among the Franks a custom very similar to *patrocinium* held a considerable place in the life of the people. *Commendation* (as the Frankish counterpart of the Roman institution was called), during the first two centuries of the Frankish occupation of Gaul was little less arduous than *patrocinium*, as is shown by the formula of *commendation*, which ran about as follows:

"To that magnificent lord *so and so*, I, *so and so*: Since it is well known to all how little I have wherewith to feed and clothe myself, I have therefore petitioned your generosity, and your goodwill has decreed to me, that I should hand myself over and commend myself to your protection, which I have accordingly done; that is to say, in the manner following: that you should aid and succor me with food and clothing, according as I shall be able to serve and merit of you. And as long as I live, I owe to do service and respect to you, suitably to my free condition; and I shall not during the time of my life have the ability to withdraw from your power or guardianship, but must remain always under your authority."¹⁷

¹⁷ *Domino magnifico illo, ego enim ille. Dum et omnibus habetur percognitum qualiter ego minime habeo unde me pascere vel vestire debeam, ideo petii pietati vestro, et mihi decrevit voluntas, ut me in vestrum mundoburdum tradere vel commendare deberem, quod ita et feci: eo videlicet modo ut me tam de victu quam et de vestimento, iuxta quod vobis servire et promereri potuero, adjuvare vel consolare debeas, et dum ego in capud advixero, ingenuili ordine tibi servitium vel obsequium impendere debeam, et de vestra potestate vel mundoburdo tempore vitae meae potestatem non habeam subtrahendi, nisi sub vestra potestate vel defensione diebus vitae meae debeam permanere. Unde convenit ut, si unus ex nobis de has conventiis se emutare voluerit, solidos tantos pari suo componat, et ipsa convenientia firma permaneat. (Unde convenit ut duas epistolas uno tenore conscriptas ex hoc inter se facere vel adfirmare deberent, quot ita et fecerunt. Rozière, I, no. XLIII. *Commendatio*. Formula is of the seventh century. Cf. formula in *Magna Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, ed. La Bigne, Paris, 1646, XVI, sec. 44, p. 43.*

It is not to be assumed that the Frankish *commendation* had its origin in the Roman or Gallic prototype: its later development is certainly Germanic. There can be positively noted only the analogy of institutions arising under similar conditions of civil life. And further, it should be made quite clear that the conversion of allodial lands as such was in no sense *commendation*, but merely one relatively minor instance in which *commendation* was primarily employed. For *commendation* implied no land tenure: in fact it involved ordinarily the contrary, being a personal, non-property contract.

This practice of *commendation* during the following hundred years continued to develop. In the eighth century the term *vassus* or *vassallus* came to replace the older form *antrustion* or *fidelis*.¹⁸ Under the date of the year 757 is recorded the precise formula of the ceremony whereby a man commended himself:

"Tbique Tassilo venit, dux Baioariorum, in vasatico se commendans per manus, sacramenta iuravit multa et innumerabilia, reliquias sanctorum martyrum manus inponens, et fidelitatem promisit regi Pippino et supradictis filiis eius . . . sic ut vassus recta mente et firma devotione per iustitiam, sicut vassus dominos suos, esse deberet."¹⁹

The ceremonial of *commendation* included the reaching out of the folded hands of the freeman, *manibus junctis se tradit, in manibus (domini) se commendat, manus suas mittit inter manus domini*.²⁰ The vassal-to-be knelt before his future lord standing or sitting, extended his hands joined together, and placed them between the hands of the lord. The lord then asked him whether he wished to become his man, and the freeman answered yes. As the final seal of the compact, the lord kissed the freeman upon the mouth. Following the act of *commendation*, came the oath of fealty.²¹ This oath²² demanded a full sur-

¹⁸ Brunner, II, p. 261.

¹⁹ *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum*, I, 140, *Annales Laurissenses*, anno 757.

²⁰ Brunner, II, p. 51, and II, p. 270.

²¹ *Ibid.*, II, 272.

²² Not to be confused with the common oath of fidelity exacted from all subjects on such occasions as the coronation of a new king or the acquiring of territory not previously under the king's control. This form of oath fell into disuse during the period of the later Merovingians, but was revived by Charlemagne in 789. Cf. Brunner, II, p. 58-59.

render of the freeman, body and soul, and the express promise to maintain the king's interests.²³

Thus far the question has been of the relation of the individual simply to the king. But *commendation* was by no means restricted to the crown. Originally, under the first race of French kings, personal relationship as it found expression in the benefice and *commendation*, was limited to the reciprocal compact of service and protection between subject and ruler. But after the principle of *commendation* was established among the Franks, there came an epoch when the decay of the Merovingian power had so progressed that the protection of the king became of doubtful value, especially in distant parts of his realm. This weakening provided an occasion for the great nobles to usurp some part of the royal prerogatives. Such arrogation was manifested in the firmer grasp which the vassals of the king began to secure upon the benefices. Another result of this waning of the royal authority was the practice that grew up whereby the great vassals at length received men under their protection as *commendati*. The movement was furthered by the kings themselves, who failed to realize the significance of the danger with which they were threatened by the new system.

As early as the sixth century, capitularies made it legal for the Franks to become vassals of the great lords of the kingdom,²⁴ and under Charlemagne this was compulsory.²⁵ Thus

²³ Brunner, II, p. 58, and II, p. 267.

²⁴ *Si quis ei, quem in patrocinio habuerit, arma dederit, vel aliquid donaverit, apud ipsum que sunt donata permaneant. Si vero alium sibi patronum elegerit, licentiam habeat cui se voluerit commendare, quoniam ingenue homini non potest prohiberi, quia in sua potestate consistit; sed reddat omnia patrono quem deseruit.* This is of the end of the fifth century. *Lex Wisig.*, lib. V, tit. III, sec. 1 (*Forum Judicum*, col. I, p. 66, Madrid, 1815). And again, *Stetit nobis de illis liberis hominibus Longobardis ut licentiam habeant se commendandi ubi voluerint, sicut in tempore Longobardorum fecerunt.* *Cap. Pipp. reg. Ital.*, a. 793 (Baluzius, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, Parisiis, 1677, I, col. 537, sec. XIII). Also, *unusquisque liber homo, post mortem domini sui, licentiam habeat se commendandi inter haec tria regna ad quemcumque voluerit. Similiter et ille qui nondum alicui commendatus est.* (Baluzius, a. 806, I, col. 443, sec. X).

²⁵ *Ut nullus comparet caballum, bovem et jumentum, vel alia, nisi eum cognoscat qui eum vendidit, aut de quo pago est, vel ubi manet vel quis*

was vassalage, in its personal, *homme-à-seigneur* relationship, brought to fullest maturity under the Carolingians.

IV

With the custom of the great nobles receiving lesser men into personal relationship there naturally grew up the system of sub-infeudation, which resulted gradually in an ascending series of subsidiary tenures that culminated in the various great feudal lords. It continued to develop from the age when the benefices underwent those first strong definitive tendencies towards the hereditary nature that marked their transformation into fiefs. The system was consummated during the tenth and eleventh centuries in a decentralized government, remained practically fixed during the twelfth century, and was finally resolved into the régime of absolute monarchy.

The benefice became hereditary during the ninth century; the interworking of the hereditary benefice with the already completed system of personal vassalage and with the resultant sub-infeudation, shows the full ascendancy of the feudal system at its height. Thereafter free alods dwindled almost to the vanishing point: *commendation* became *homage*, which was marked by the disappearance of the personal element and by the substitution of the agreement based solely on land possession and the increasing obligations attached thereto. The tenth century saw the last of the personal relationship without land consideration;²⁶ at this point the entire status of the relationship of man to man was altogether modified. Homage, displacing for all time personal *commendation*, was formulated thus: *Devenio homo vester DE TENEMENTO, QUOD DE VOBIS*

est eius senior. Cap. Car. Mag. a. 806, Baluzius, I, col. 450, sec. 3. Cf. also Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges, I, p. 395, Conventus apud Marsnam, a. 847. Annuntiatio Karoli: Volumus etiam ut unusquisque liber homo in nostro regno seniore, qualem voluerit, in nobis et in nostris fidelibus accipiat. Mandamus etiam ut nullus homo seniore suum sine iusta ratione dimittat, nec aliquis eum recipiat, nisi sicut tempore antecessorum nostrorum consuetudo fuit.

²⁶ Except isolated cases, constantly decreasing in number, such as the one Acher mentions, in *Les Archaismes apparents dans la chanson de Raoul de Cambrai* (*Revue des langues romanes*, L, 1907, pp. 237 ff.)

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TENEO, *et fidem vobis portabo contra omnes gentes, salva fide debita Domino Regi et haeredibus suis.*"²⁷

Consideration of the function of the personal relationship of *homme-à-seigneur* as developed in feudal French history and as instanced in feudal French poetry, with a view to identify the coincidences in each of these two sources will be the attempt made in the remainder of this study.

* * * *

The respective dates at which the extant poems were written in the form which has been handed down has been satisfactorily settled by the editors of the various manuscripts. This written stage was of course subsequent to the period of the actual historical events which the individual poems relate. The feudal poems, although they are not historical in all their details, have been connected, almost without exception, with historical events of different periods of early French history. This historical background incorporated in many of the poems proves that, wherever they bear traces of historicity, they may be assigned to definite periods between the sixth and tenth centuries.

These two different methods of dating the poetry, whether one starts from the period at which were written the manuscript copies now extant, or from the point of view of the relation of the events in actual history, have been employed exhaustively, and with excellent results. But given thus the historical basis for the poetry, and the fixation of date of the

²⁷ Cf. Du Cange, *Glossarium, sub voce*. The full ceremonial of feudal homage and investiture is found in *Patrologiae Latinae*, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris, 1854, CLXVI, col. 996, sec. 90 B. *Vita et Martyrio Beati Caroli Boni Flandriae Comititis*. This description, although relating to an incident in the twelfth century, is an accurate description as well of the ceremonial in the earliest feudal age. *Primum hominum fecerunt ita: Comes requisivit, si integre vellet homo suus fieri: et ille respondit, Volo, et junctis manibus amplexatus a manibus comitis, osculo confederati sunt. Secundo loco fidem dedit is qui hominum fecerat prolocutori comitis in iis verbis: Spondeo in fide mea me fidelem fore amodo comiti Willelmo, et sibi hominum integraliter contra omnes observaturum fide bona et sine dolo. Idemque super reliquias sanctorum tertio loco juravit. Deinde virgula, quam manu consul tenebat, investituras donavit eis omnibus qui hoc pacto securitatem et hominum simulque juramentum fecerunt.*

extant manuscripts, there has not yet been solved the question as to the time at which these legends, more or less interwoven with historical material, first found their way into poetic form. The problem has been approximately solved, but always by an application of the two methods described above, with the single exception of Bédier's epoch-making hypothesis as to the joint monastic and jongleuresque origin of the epic poetry.

The writer has no intention to discuss here the theory embodied in the *Légendes épiques* of Bédier. It is proposed rather to throw upon this general question of the period of composition of the poetry what light may be derived from a third method of analysis not hitherto brought into play to the extent it seems to deserve.

In the content of French feudal poetry, aside from reference to actual historical events, there is a not inconsiderable mass of what may be termed custom-material. There is no need for any proof to be adduced that the people's conception of any institution varies from one generation to another. The religion of the fathers is ignorant superstition to the sons. The beliefs of the past are a source of amusement to the present. In the early middle ages, the expression of a writer was necessarily that of his own times and *milieu* to a far greater degree than in a subsequent age when freer access to historical sources obtained. It is justifiable then to consider the social life and institutions reflected in the feudal poems as virtually faithful portrayals of the age in which they were composed.

There is, however, one difficulty arising at the outset; the poems, though individually written at definite periods, happen to have been revamped from time to time by writers of successive epochs who undertook to modernize them. They cannot then be said to retain intact the whole spirit and intent of the earlier or original composition. This is evident as regards the confused, almost obliterated reflection of historical events in the subsequent redactions. It is equally true of the customs and sundry phases of feudal life revealed in the poetry. On the other hand, these historical events, though distorted, are still recognizable in the later poetry; so also

some of the primitive social manners are retained in the poems that hark back to the age of the early composition, albeit in the extant form they are obscured by the revision of redactors unfamiliar with the *milieu* of the original of many years before.²⁸

Attention will be paid in other parts of this work to certain of these customs pertaining to the domestic and the religious life of the subjects of feudal France. The study at present is to be confined to the single institution of the relationship of *homme-à-seigneur*, as evidenced in the poems. This institution, as outlined above in its historical phases, finds a marked parallel in the poetry.

The *Roman de Floovant*, though dating back in its present form only to the second half of the twelfth century,²⁹ is related by historical association to Clovis and the time of the Merovingians. From this viewpoint, it is, therefore, the oldest of all French epic poetry, and is to be considered as distinctly pre-feudal. The existence and the emphasizing of a non-property relation of *homme-à-seigneur* is then to be expected and the presence of it goes not a little way to prove the primitive character of the poem. The whole trend of the poem involves the fealty of a vassal to his lord, and the property compact is conspicuous by its absence.

Floovant, as the story runs, is son of the emperor Clovis, and has been placed under the ban of the kingdom for seven

²⁸ An example of a very primitive custom retained in the poetry is the saddle-bearing episode in *Raoul de Cambrai*, 1770 ff., where Raoul, having insulted Bernier, offers to make amends by travelling the public highway carrying Bernier's saddle upon his back, and saying to each person whom he encounters, "Behold Bernier's saddle (*Veis ci la B. cele*)." The earliest known example of this custom is found in a capitulary of Louis II, in the year 866 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Capitularia*, II, p. 96). Cf. Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*, 4th ed., Leipzig, 1899, II, pp. 312 ff. Another such very ancient custom is the form of oath in *Raoul de Cambrai*, 3017, *Terre ne erbe ne te puet aténir*. Cf. Grimm, I, pp. 154 ff., and Settegast, *Erde und Gras als Rechtssymbol im Raoul de Cambrai* (*Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, XXXI, 1907, pp. 588 ff.).

²⁹ Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, I, p. 101, Paris, 1896-1899. Cf. Rajna, *Origini dell' epopea francese*, pp. 133 ff., Firenze, 1884.

years. His esquire, Richier, returning to the city and finding his master gone, swears that for no man under heaven will he be deterred from following his lord.⁸⁰

"Surely, says Richier, I would not fail him even were my limbs severed from me."⁸¹ And he sets out at once after his master, overtaking him at the moment when Floovant has been captured by Saracens, from whom he rescues him. Together they enter the service of King Flores, who is at war with the Saracens.

One fact that stands out in this episode is that the position of Richier is not that of an esquire of the later age of Chivalry. Floovant, during the siege of a walled city, finds relief from the stress of battle in chatting with a maiden who is watching the conflict from the tower above. Richier comes up to rebuke his master:

"You play the recreant, when you talk idly here. Go into her chamber to converse with her more intimately. Her safe-conduct would not be worth a farthing if the Saracens found you; you would lose your head. Come now, wretched knave, you may well deem yourself of little worth, for you do leave off slaying the pagans, and seeking renown and glory. You were driven from France by reason of your base despite; so you have neither silver nor steed nor charger, if you win them not by iron and steel! Ah! Floovant, you are right fair at speech, but for nought have you arms and a war-horse. Your body is fair, and your face is comely; through love of this lady you will gain more than great wealth! Oh, unworthy king, never were you of royal blood, if you have not rich mantles, charger and palfrey, and you win them not with the sword of Vienne!"⁸²

And Floovant accepts the rebuke humbly: "Richier," says Floovant, "thanks, for God's sake. I will do it no more, now pardon me."⁸³

Such an episode is precisely what might have been expected between a chieftain and a man bound to him by no other than personal ties, and illustrates too the duty and privilege of the man in the pre-feudal age to advise his master in all matters pertaining to his welfare.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Floovant*, vv. 186-188.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 451-467.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 468-469.

⁸⁴ Cf. Brunner, I, p. 190, and II, pp. 258 ff.

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A short time after this, Floovant is made prisoner by the paynim infidels. Flores' armies return home defeated, but they console themselves with a banquet. Others might feast, but not Richier:

Rather does he have his bed made, and goes to lie down thereon. But sleep he cannot, though his limbs were severed from him. And he weeps and laments his rightful lord: "Ah! by an evil fate came you here, noble warrior. Now go I into France, grieved and wrathful, a pelt on my neck like any beggar. And to meet me will come dukes and counts and princes, and ladies and maidens, and the proud emperor himself will ask news of his son whom he holds so dear. Alas, what can I say as to where I have abandoned him? It will never be believed that I have not slain him treacherously. But by the apostle John whom Christ loved, rather will I take many a heavy blow than that I should not find Floovant, my lord."⁸⁵

Then Richier rises and boots himself, clothes himself in hauberk, laces on his helm, hangs his shield about his neck, and takes congé, and goes forth to save his lord by a perilous venture.⁸⁶ At the moment of Richier's coming, Floovant is a prisoner of the Saracens. Richier gains access to the dungeon, and meets a gaoler coming out, who remarks laughingly:

"Hear now of this Frenchman! I have beaten him so well that he will never have need of aught in all his life." When Richier hears this, almost does the blood burst from his veins, then he says between his teeth, so that the other does not hear, "Thou filthy, ill-kept, ill-born, treacherous knave, for the love of my master shalt lose thy head." And he drew his keen sword from his left side, and smote the heathen pagan such a grievous blow that he split him in twain down to the very navel.⁸⁷

When Richier comes rushing into the prison cell, Floovant thinks it is the gaoler returned to beat him again; and he seizes a cudgel that lies on the floor, and makes as if to strike Richier.

"Stop!" cries Richier, "I am Richier, thy faithful friend, bound to thee by tribal ties, and am come to aid thee against the Saracens." And

⁸⁵ *Floovant*, 921-935.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 936-939.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1291-1299.

when Floovant hears him, exceeding great joy has he thereat: by reason of the happiness that he has thereof is he right merry.⁸⁸

This scene recalls the friendship of Amis and Amiles in the thirteenth century poem of Oriental tradition, the vital difference between them being that the tie uniting Amis and Amiles is the sworn bond of the lifelong friendship of equals. The union of these proverbial comrades is based upon mutual affection and equality, recognized and consecrated by a ceremony religious and superstitions in nature:⁸⁹ whereas the relationship existing between Richier and Floovant is a tangible expression of the relation of *homme-à-seigneur*, bound by the ties of devotion and duty, and in actual fact, was perhaps the most conspicuous institution of that system of government which, originating with the Merovingians, was brought to full completion under the Carolingians.

After *Floovant*, the next poem worthy of note, in chronological order, is the *Couronnement de Louis*, which, preserved in manuscript of the thirteenth century, is related to events in the ninth and tenth centuries. The notable feature about this poem is the diverse character of its composition, made up as it is of not less than five separate poems, with the result that unity of action is entirely lacking. The one element retained unimpaired throughout is the theme of the purely non-property relationship of Guillaume *au cort nez* to his lord, King Louis. It is remarkable that in a poem so broken and unconnected in episode, there should remain perfectly preserved this predominating theme, the exemplification of the relation of the non-property vassal to his lord. The expression of this pre-feudal idea of personal loyalty is the sole and at the same time sufficient reason for the grouping together here of the series of unrelated and extraneous incidents.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1318-1321.

⁸⁹ The ceremonial details are not given in the poem; only the oath of comradeship is mentioned. The mystic and religious nature of the compact is indicated, however, by preceding statements of the Divine Will through which Amis and Amiles were predestined to this relationship. More explicit details are not to be expected in the poetry, which being of popular rather than learned origin, could reproduce only vaguely an institution that had no roots in French soil. Cf. the following chapter of this work.

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The *Couronnement de Louis*, receiving its name from the first episode of the composite recital, is the exposition in narrative form of the fealty of Guillaume *au cort nez* to the Emperor Charles and his son Louis. In the opening scene, Charles, now well advanced in years, decides to give the crown to his son Louis. But his purpose is about to be thwarted, when Guillaume enters abruptly and with a terrible blow of his mailed fist slays outright the treacherous baron who opposes the king's will. Then the Count, seeing the crown resting upon the altar, seizes it without delay, comes to the young prince, and places it upon his head. "Take this, my lord, and may God grant you strength to be a righteous lawgiver."⁴⁰

Guillaume then makes a successful expedition into Italy, and at the close of the campaign is about to take a wife, when from France come messengers who bring bitter news. They tell that King Charles is dead, and the regions of the realm are fallen to Louis. But the traitors wish to make the son of Richard of Roen their king.⁴¹

Then Guillaume abandons his bride, and hastens back to defend his lord.

Three whole years is Guillaume the valiant in Poitou, conquering the land. And there is no day so sacred, neither Easter, nor Noël, nor yet All Saints' Day that ought to be observed, that Guillaume has not his steel helmet shut to, girded on his sword, armed upon his horse. Great pain the baron suffers to maintain and defend his lord.⁴²

The rebellion put down, once again Guillaume makes an expedition into Italy, only to be summoned forthwith to the aid of King Louis. Guillaume asks advice of his nephew Bertran:

"Fair nephew, hear me. For God's sake what counsel do you give me? The king, my lord, is altogether disinherited."⁴³

Then Bertrand, wearied at last of the king's ever-recurring demands, replies

"Well, let him be. Let us abandon France, and commend it to the

⁴⁰ *Couronnement de Louis*, 142-146.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1432-1440.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2011-2019.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2659-2661.

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devil, and with it this king who is such an ass. Never will he hold a square foot of his inheritance."⁴⁴

But the deep-rooted principle of fealty overcomes Guillaume's impatience, and his final decision is:

"Let us drop the discussion. In the service of the king I wish to spend my youth and strength."⁴⁵

The value of this poem, *le Couronnement de Louis*, as portraying the personal relationship strictly of *homme-à-seigneur* on a non-property compact may, however, be subject to question, by reason of the fact that this is not a portrayal of an ordinary lord and his vassals, but of the king and his great lords. The idea of personal fealty is nevertheless predominant, and its conception belongs to a period prior to the full development of feudalism. The *Couronnement de Louis*, says Gautier, is, together with the *Roland*, the most anti-feudal of all the *chansons de geste*. In it the ideas of nationality and patriotism are fully developed. And generally the older a chanson is, the more truly French or national it is.⁴⁷ The reason for this is obvious in that as soon as feudalism had broken up the power of the king, all idea of national loyalty, centered as it was in the very person of the king, disappeared, and the only allegiance known subsequently was that of a man to a lord from whom he held land. Thus the *Couronnement de Louis* appears to be a poem originally composed in its diverse parts soon after the time of the historic events with which it deals. It is later in composition than the *Floovant*, yet evidently pre-feudal in conception.⁴⁸

A very pointed example of personal devotion is found in the *Gormund et Isembard*.⁴⁹ The manuscript of this chanson is of the thirteenth century, whereas the material is related to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2662-2665.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2666-2667.

⁴⁶ L. Gautier, *L'idée politique dans les chansons de geste*, in *Revue des questions historiques*, VIII, p. 109, Paris, 1869.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Cf. Darmesteter, *De Floovante*, especially Pars III, cap. unicum, Paris, 1877.

⁴⁹ *Gormont et Isembard*, ed. Bayot, Paris, 1914.

events which took place under Louis III, in the year 881.⁵⁰ The unique manuscript of this poem, however, is fragmentary and mutilated. In the extant text, the relation of Gormund and Isembard is purely a personal and non-property one, but the version of the *chanson* as preserved is too incomplete to warrant such a conclusion without further data. External evidence, however, shows that Isembard was a French warrior who was compelled to flee from France, and took service with King Gormund, who later invaded France.⁵¹

Isembard then served Gormund not as a consequence of any property obligation, but rather as the result of a voluntary and personal compact of service in return for protection. And the devotion of Isembard may properly be taken as expressing something of that primitive *homme-à-seigneur* relationship that in the ninth and tenth centuries showed signs of disappearing definitively.

Both the beginning and the end of this *chanson de geste* are missing. The fragment opens with a mighty battle between the forces of King Louis and King Gormund. In this conflict Louis is victorious and slays Gormund. The first notable scene follows when Isembard finds the body of his dead lord and king.

"Behold you Isembard riding down the lane. Now he sees Gormund in the meadow slain, prostrate, bleeding, mouth gaping wide. And Isembard well-nigh swoons of grief; hear ye his lament: "Ah! king and emperor, many a time have I told you in your own country that the French are hardy warriors; never was man born of woman who might wrest any land from them. Ah, Gormund, my king, my emperor, how noble was your visage, and how fair and ruddy! How stained now and changed! Louis, worthy emperor, you have served France well today, and Gormund has paid dear therefor. But, before God, I will never desert his cause so long as I can gird on sword."⁵²

And the desire for revenge, which was, after fealty, the

⁵⁰ *Fragment de Gormund et Isembard*, ed. R. Heiligbrodt, p. 505 (*Romanische Studien*, ed. E. Boehmer, Strassburg, 1878, III, pp. 501-506).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 502-505. Cf. also F. Lot, *Gormund et Isembard* (*Romania*, XXVII, 1898, pp. 1-50).

⁵² *Gormont et Isembart*, vv. 464-488.

supreme motive of this primitive age, asserts itself. Isembard looks about at the fleeing warriors, and cries out:

"Whither flee ye, people, gone astray without a lord in any country? Turn back upon your course and let us avenge our emperor!"⁵³

This is a most noteworthy appeal; their king is dead, the cause is lost, and the sole hope is escape by flight. Nevertheless, they rally, only to lose heart. Soon again the pagans flee away every one, and Isembard alone is left.⁵⁴ And although alone, Isembard fights fearless to the last, and dies unwavering in his devotion to his lord.

The three poems thus far considered have illustrated to a fair degree of precision the fealty and personal devotion that existed before feudalism had achieved the task of establishing property tenure, and the inter-relation of property rights as the one prime factor of French political and social life. In these poems it has been noted that the property consideration is entirely absent, but the demonstration of the point in this investigation is not quite complete as yet. Each one of these poems shows a distinctive and different obstacle hindering a clear depiction and comprehension of the ideal relation: in the *Floovant*, the portrayal is marred by a constant intrusion of *roman d'aventure* elements, undoubtedly due to later treatment, but not easily to be distinguished in all cases from the primitive parts of the poem. The *Couronnement de Louis* contains too many royalist features to be regarded as characteristic of a pure *homme-à-seigneur* relationship. What is extant of the *Gormund et Isembard* comes nearer the mark, but is, after all, too fragmentary, except for purposes of partial illustration.

There is, however, one other poem of this type that has been preserved, and in it are discoverable all the phases of this relation suggested in the three just discussed; and furthermore, none of the obscuring elements of the other poems mentioned mars to any considerable degree the development of the theme of the *homme-à-seigneur* relation in this last, namely, the *Raoul de Cambrai*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 490-493.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 613-614.

The chanson of *Raoul de Cambrai* is preserved in a single manuscript⁵⁵ of the last half of the twelfth century.⁵⁶ The main action of the epic has been connected, however, with events of the year 943.⁵⁷

The story of the *Raoul de Cambrai* is known well enough not to require a detailed analysis. A few words will therefore suffice by way of summary.

During the days of his minority, Raoul de Cambrai is bereft of his paternal fief by King Louis. Having arrived at the age of manhood, he demands from King Louis the return of the fief. Louis compromises, and assures to Raoul the land of whatever baron of the realm shall thereafter be the first to die. It is to be understood that Louis means this to apply only in the case of a baron leaving no heirs. But subsequently, when Herbert, Count of Vermandois, dies, leaving four sons, Raoul holds the king to the letter of his promise, demands the Vermandois, and is granted this fief on condition that he can seize and hold it by force. Raoul invades the Vermandois and burns a convent where Marsent, mother of his esquire Bernier (who is a natural son of Marsent and Ybert of Vermandois) perishes in the flames. Bernier thereupon becomes bitterly angry with his master over this misdeed, and receiving a savage blow at his hands, deserts Raoul, and later slays Raoul in battle. After a long lapse of time, when apparent peace has been restored between the two families, Guerri, uncle of Raoul, avenges his nephew by treacherously slaying Bernier.

From one point of view, this epic centers upon the death of

⁵⁵ There are in addition the following fragments: first, some 250 lines of a manuscript now lost, which were copied by the président Fauchet in the sixteenth century. Secondly, two fragments published in 1906 by Bayot (*Revue des Bibliothèques et archives de Belgique*): the first fragment contains verses 1-105, and 847-980; the second gives a continuation of the *Raoul*, identifying it with the legend of *Gormund et Isembard*: *Pour ceste guerre passerent Sarrazin / Avec Gourmont, le riche barbarin, / Par le conseil Ysembart le meschin / Que Loeys en fist aler frarin. / Cis Ysembart estoit germain cousin Raoul l'enfant celui de Cambresin*. This linking of the legend of *Raoul de Cambrai* with *Gormund et Isembard* is found also in Philippe de Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, 14030 ff.

⁵⁶ Petit de Julleville, I, p. 106.

⁵⁷ *Raoul de Cambrai*, pp. xv ff.

Raoul, with the attendant vengeance exacted therefor by Guerri. But the poem presents even greater unity of plot and a far more clearly developed theme, if Bernier and not Raoul is regarded as the central figure of the poem. Certainly, with the possible exception of Raoul, Bernier ought to be so considered, when it is seen that Raoul disappears completely from the narrative after line 3721, just about midway in the story. Bernier is the ideal type of liegeman in the primitive feudalism of the tenth century, as contrasted with the period of chivalry represented in the Court Epic of the thirteenth century. At the very outset, in *Raoul de Cambrai*, Bernier is shown united by ties of fealty to Raoul, but beholden to him by no other consideration than that he has voluntarily entered Raoul's service, receiving his food and raiment from him, and also has been dubbed by him as his knight. Of paramount importance in this connection is the fact that the poet in no way refers to Bernier as holding any fief of Raoul, or property of any sort.

The strictly personal nature of this bond between Raoul and Bernier is evidenced by the words of Ybert to his son Bernier when the latter, after renouncing the service of Raoul as a result of their quarrel over the burning of Marsent, returns home:

"So long as you were a boy under my guardianship," says Ybert, "we nourished you in lordly fashion And when you became of age, you deserted us by reason of your egregious folly. You believed the flattery of Raoul, and betook yourself straight to Cambrai. You have served Raoul, and he has done you kindness."⁵⁸

Likewise, before Raoul fulfills his threat to invade Vermandois, his mother asks:

"Just tell me what will become of Bernier now that you have nourished him until you have made him a knight?"⁵⁹

Bernier is thus under obligations to Raoul only through personal gratitude for sundry favors, not for any property consideration. How inviolable that primitive bond was, is the real theme of the chanson.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vv. 1873-1879.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1077-1078.

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Just as Raoul is about to invade the Vermandois, ancestral possession of the kinsmen of Bernier, the young esquire makes this protest:

"I am your liegeman, that I deny not. But for my part I do not advise you to take their lands, for I know right well that they have the assistance of Ernaut de Doai: in no land have I beheld such warriors. Seek to come to terms with them before you do them aught of harm."⁶⁰

The notable feature of this warning is that it is prefaced by Bernier's express avowal "*I am your liegeman (Je sui vostre hom, ja nel vos celerai).*"

Raoul proceeds to lay waste the Vermandois, and Bernier is gloomy and thoughtful when he sees the lands of his father and his friends thus burned; and he almost dies with wrath. Wherever they go, Bernier always delays, and is in no haste to arm himself.⁶¹

But although in this attack upon the Vermandois, Bernier strives to avoid taking an active part against his own father, the idea of deserting Raoul never occurs to Bernier. The bond of homage and fealty in this case is stronger than the ties of son to father—a situation in early feudal life which served the poet as his sole and all-inspiring theme.

Not long thereafter Bernier meets with his mother and talks with her about the designs Raoul has upon the Vermandois. She reminds him that he is his father's only son, and will inherit his father's possessions if he goes over to his side in defense of the domains of his ancestors. The words here given in answer by Bernier, and those that follow from his mother are in themselves an epitome of the entire poem and a reflection of early feudal standards.

Then says Bernier, "By Saint Thomas I swear I would not do it for the fief of Baudas. Raoul my lord is more wicked than Judas. But he is my lord; he gives me horse and armor, and cloths and silken stuffs. I would not fail him for the fief of Damas, until everyone says, "Bernier, you are right."⁶²

And the mother replies: "Son, by my faith, you are right. Serve your lord, you will gain God thereby."

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 934-939.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1224-1228.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1379-1387.

Stronger than any blood relationship, this bond of *homme-à-seigneur* was beyond every material consideration. In the events of the poem, a climax of crude dramatic sort is reached when Raoul sets fire to the monastery of Origny; when death comes to Bernier's mother, Marsent, in the ensuing conflagration. Bernier is driven well-nigh to the limit of his endurance by this cruel deed, and reproaches Raoul, though with a certain restraint even at this point, while solemnly acknowledging the continuance of his position as liegeman of Raoul.

"Raoul, fair lord, says Bernier, you do much that is praiseworthy, but on the other hand you do much that is worthy of blame. . . . I am your liegeman, nor do I seek to hide it; but you have rendered me evil reward for my services. You burnt my mother there within that monastery, and from death there is no recovery. But now you wish to destroy my father and my uncles! It is no marvel if I begin to be angry."⁶³

Raoul retorts by picking up a fragment of a broken spear, and striking Bernier. This act of personal violence proves enough to abolish every hitherto recognized bond. Bernier renounces his allegiance to Raoul, and starts off forthwith towards his father's camp, which is pitched under Saint-Quentin. A great battle follows, in the midst of which Raoul and Bernier meet. Bernier finds himself no longer beholden to Raoul in any wise, yet his years of personal service recur to his mind, and he begins to reflect on whether he has not, even now, too easily forsworn his lord's service, with the result that after reciting his grievances he ends by seeking peace of Raoul:

"Ah, Raoul, my lord, son of a noble mother, I cannot forget that you dubbed me knight. But a heavy price have you since then made me pay. . . . You burnt my mother in the monastery of Origny, and my head you broke with your spear. I cannot deny that you offered me amend, but I was angered when I saw my blood flow. If now again you offer it to me, I will not refuse it, but will pardon all."⁶⁴

Raoul answers with a basely insulting refusal, and in the fight that follows Bernier kills him. Even when forced in self

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1638-1649.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3055-3070.

defense to slay his erstwhile master, Bernier ponders with deep regret over the deed: "*Of this, so help me God, it grieves me, that I have slain Raoul, but I have done it within my right.*"⁶⁵

After the death of Raoul the war between the factions of Vermandois and Cambr sis drags on for a time, but at length the two families are reconciled and Bernier takes in marriage, as a sequel of good omen to the feud, the daughter of Guerri, Raoul's uncle. Meanwhile the death of Raoul seems to have been forgotten.

One day Bernier and Guerri happen to be journeying together on their return from a pilgrimage. Approaching once more the place of the great battle where Raoul was slain aforetime, Bernier remembers it all keenly, and sighs. Guerri straightway inquires of him what his trouble is. Bernier at first keeps silent, but yields finally to the insistence of his aged kinsman.

"I will tell you," Bernier replies, "though it grieves me that it so pleases you. I am reminded of the noble Raoul, who took such pride upon himself that he thought to deprive four counts of their heritage. See here the very spot where I slew him."⁶⁶

The memories thus unfortunately recalled awaken in the old man all the passion of a desire for revenge that has long been denied. He gives no sign of his thought, but when the two stop near a brook to give water to their steeds, Guerri all unawares loosens one of the stirrups from his saddle and suddenly smites Bernier upon the head, dealing him his death-blow.

With reference to the subject of medieval civil administration, a relationship of inferior to superior like that of Bernier to Raoul was possible as late as the twelfth century;⁶⁷ but the actual period of the general prevalence of this relation of *homme- -seigneur* ended with the tenth century. Subsequently the status existed merely as a legal survival. And whatever may be said as to the connection of historical events with the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3163-3164.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8379-8384.

⁶⁷ There has been noted the single example adduced by Acher: cf. *supra*, p. 61, note 26.

episodes related in *Raoul de Cambrai*, the social phases reproduced therein, and the attitude of the poet toward such matters, reflect beyond question the period of the original conception of the poem. From this point of view, therefore, the highest probability is that the chanson of *Raoul de Cambrai*, or that part of it which constitutes the primitive nucleus, came into existence not later than the end of the tenth century.⁶⁸

On the side of history, the personal non-property relationship of *homme-à-seigneur* has been presented in this chapter with the purpose of demonstrating the growth and progress of this relationship from the sixth to the ninth century. During those four centuries the benefice originated, developed, and was at length transformed into the fief. It has been shown also that by the tenth century the fief had entirely displaced the benefice, and the land-tenure contract had in the same time supplanted the personal non-property relationship. In the consideration of the social and political conditions reflected by Old French poetry, four *chansons de geste* have been analysed; (1) the *Floovant*, of the middle of the ninth century, evidently prior to the appearance of the property element in the vassal to lord contract, as is shown by the similar status of the actual institution in history at that time; (2) the *Couronnement de Louis*, and (3) the *Gormund et Isembard*, in the last half of the ninth century, when the personal domination of Charlemagne and his son Louis had resulted in the highest development of the personal relationship of *homme-à-seigneur*; and (4) the *Raoul de Cambrai*, of the tenth century, which resumes and preserves the record of the institution of personal fealty to a degree not discoverable in any other early Romance monument, nor in any of the historical sources of the pre-feudal period.

⁶⁸ Cf. Suchier and Birch-Hirschfeld, *Geschichte der französischen Literatur*, Leipzig and Vienna, 1909, pp. 48 ff. Note however the error of accrediting the composition of *Raoul de Cambrai* to Bertolais.

CHAPTER V.

PHASES OF FEUDAL CUSTOM IN FRENCH EPIC POETRY

I

The period beginning with the accession to the throne of Hugues Capet, in the year 987, and ending with the advent, in 1226, of the reign of Saint Louis, saw the completest internal activity of the forces of feudalism in France.¹ This feudal organization of France, at the acme of its development in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, was based primarily upon land-tenure. But the weakening of the central government which had made inevitable the infinite parcelling of land, had at the same time brought other vital consequences.

First of all, this very parcelling of the land, by the inducement that it offered every noble to aggrandize his fief, resulted in a constant appeal to force of arms, since the central government lacked the power to maintain an equitable division, even had it so desired. And, arising directly from the inability of the king to assure protection as well as from the land tenure system, resulted that status of the individual so peculiar to the feudal period.

In this chapter, the effort is made to explain and to illustrate, from historical sources and from poetry, certain of the customs of the age bearing upon this status of the individual, and the part that force played in the life of the people. Next to the sub-infeudation of land, these two conceptions were the outstanding features of the full maturity of feudalism.²

¹ For an authoritative survey of this period, cf. Molinier, *Étude sur l'administration féodale dans le Languedoc* (*Histoire générale de Languedoc*, Devic and Vaissète, VII, pp. 132 ff., Toulouse, 1879).

² Seignobos, *Régime féodal*, especially 52-61 (Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, II, pp. 1 ff., Paris, 1903).

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In France, at least, the first of these elements involved the position of each individual, regulated and conditioned by some one above him and definitely related to others beneath him; but a status and relationship based in each instance upon the tenure of lands of greater or less value and power, and upon the interdependence of these lands according to their military strength.

This interdependence must be taken in a restricted meaning, for the reason that it was never the mutual support of equals, upon the same level, but of inferior and superior, in an ascending series. Two men might have been apparently equal when there was no intercourse of one with the other; brought into contact, one of them became inevitably subject to the other.

What appears on the surface to be a direct and valid argument refuting the existence of the system outlined above has been elaborated by Flach in his article entitled *Compagnonnage dans les chansons de geste*, a study first appearing in *Les Études romanes dédiées à Gaston Paris*.³ This article was incorporated in 1893 in the second volume of Flach's work entitled *Les Origines de l'ancienne France*, in which the original study is somewhat amplified, but not changed in any considerable measure.⁴ This essay of Flach, a very eminent authority in matters of early French history, ought not to be overlooked, because of a certain confusion that might arise out of a present-day and somewhat common misconception.

It is not intended here to take up the question in detail. Such a study would furnish of itself material enough for an exhaustive investigation. Nor is there intended any detailed criticism of Flach's most scholarly article. An analysis of his work need go only so far as is necessary to prevent, in regard to the matters here discussed, any errors involved in a too hasty evaluation or exaggeration of that part of Flach's work bearing upon the *homme-à-seigneur* relation.

³ Paris, 1891, pp. 141-180.

⁴ J. Flach, *Les Origines de l'ancienne France*, II, pp. 427-490, Paris, 1893.

The title of the study, *Compagnonnage*, Flach has not defined. The word does not occur in the *chansons de geste* nor elsewhere in early French writings, either prose or verse. The modern connotation is of course inapplicable. Whatever explanation Flach may urge as to the use of the word must be found in the context of his own work. The text of the article in question shows that he invests this vocable with several meanings, diverse and unrelated.

In the first division of his theme, *Le Comitatus germanicus*,⁵ the term expresses the relation of a Germanic chieftain to the warriors under him, whether his authority be derived by inheritance, or whether it accrue from the voluntary submission to his leadership. And in this part of the discussion, the relation existing between the chieftain and the foremost of his warriors is called by the author *compagnonnage*. In the next division,⁶ *compagnonnage* is applied to the blood-brotherhood inherent among the primitive Scandinavians, a relationship having as its basis the transfusion of blood between two or more men who participated in certain pagan rites or other forms of blood-covenant common to many primitive peoples, and which survives to this day among the Arabs.⁷ But this practice has never obtained in the history of France, if the sources can be depended upon. And there is no historic mention of it among the Germanic tribes since the first century B.C.⁸

Incidentally, it may be adduced that if Flach in his article means to imply that the rite itself, or the tradition of it, came into France through outside agencies, more emphasis might well have been laid upon the Oriental influence, which is, moreover, so marked in the *Amis et Amiles*, the poem upon

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 435.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

⁷ Frazer, the final authority on matters of religion and superstition among primitive peoples, in reference to the blood-covenant, refers to H. C. Trumbull, *Blood Covenant*, Phila., 1898, pp. 8-12; J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, III, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 130, London, 1914, 3d ed.

⁸ Trumbull, *Blood Covenant*, p. 320. Cf. Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*, I, 163 ff., 263; 265-6.

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which Flach bases so large a part of his discussion. In any case, this blood-covenant, styled *compagnonnage* by Flach, is quite other than the form of bond characteristic of a Germanic chieftain and his chosen group of warriors.

Under the next following rubric, *Compagnonnage sous les rois francs*,⁹ *compagnonnage* is considered as the relation of *senior* and *commendati*, an unmistakable instance of superior to inferior, having to do doubtless with the same institution of *homme-à-seigneur* relationship among the Germanic tribes, but sharing nothing in common with the blood covenant of the Scandinavians. The subsequent chapter¹⁰ bears upon *compagnonnage* as the uniting together of members of the same family bound by ties of blood kinship.

In the next part,¹¹ the same word is applied to the relation borne by a *seigneur* to his *maisnie*, that is, to the vassals composing his personal retinue, while in the following division of the subject,¹² Flach cites the case where thirty thousand men are dependent upon one lord, under whom they set out in search of adventure. This last example is from the poetry. In the last chapter but one, *La Fraternité fictive*,¹³ poetic friendships such as that of Roland and Oliver are dwelt upon. And finally, the chapter entitled *Le Compagnonnage parfait*,¹⁴ which is to be thought of as the ultimate expression of *compagnonnage*, an ideal which is realized when two men are predestined by Divine Will to be relatives, to be brothers, according to a purely poetic sentiment never to be met with in any feudal régime.

These last two chapters are an epitome of the whole article, showing at once the faults and the merits of an apparently historical article, of no mean literary merit, but based almost exclusively upon poetic sources, and upon analogies which, though clearly plausible, are extraneous to French feudal conditions, of record in history.

⁹ Flach, *Origines de l'ancienne France*, II, p. 442.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 455.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 469.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 471.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 485.

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In the development of this theory of the equality of men in the feudal age, in addition to this analogy with Scandinavian custom, and an array of historical facts concerning the *homme-to-seigneur* relation in French history, Flach lays great stress upon the use of certain words in the epic poetry which are construed by him to convey an idea of equality among men, and a form and degree of figmental brotherhood. This error of judgment arises chiefly out of his misinterpretation of the words *compagnon*—usually in the vocative form *compains*—and *pair*, or *compere*.

Flach interprets *compains* as always denoting this *fraternité fictive*. The generally accepted etymological meaning is *one who eats bread with another*. There are instances in the poetry where the word could be understood as indicating some closer relation than acquaintance, or interest in a common cause, but examples are always at hand where the word is impossible of rendition except in the broadest sense of casual amity, and the conventional term of greeting in the daily affairs of men with men. Such is the use of the word—to mention but a single instance of many—in line 2879 of *Guy de Nanteuil*, a poem of the end of the twelfth century: "*Compeins, que faites vous? quer poigniés à bandon.*"¹⁵

The context shows that the word is employed by one man to another whom he has never before seen. The sole relation between them happens to be that, although from different countries, of different nationality and serving in different armies, they are at the moment fighting a common enemy.

Another word that Flach has adduced as proof of this brotherhood of men, without full regard to its correct meaning, is *compere*, or *per*, which he takes in the sense of equality only. In a discussion upon the origin of the twelve peers, Lot tabulates the connotations of the word as follows.¹⁶

1. La signification première de *par*, celle d'homme de même condition sociale et politique, s'est conservée naturellement pendant tout le

¹⁵ *Gui de Nanteuil*, ed. Meyer, Paris, 1861. v. 2879.

¹⁶ F. Lot, *Quelques mots sur l'origine des Pairs de France* (*Revue historique*, LIV, 1894, p. 35).

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moyen âge, mais ce mot a pris des acceptions plus particulière dès une époque ancienne; 2. il désigne les époux; 3. il désigne des frères ou des cousins unis par un serment commun; 4. il s'applique à la fois au seigneur et au vassal; 4. pair désigne encore les vassaux bénéficiaires de l'empereur, etc.; 6. en combinant le sens premier et le sens quatrième, le mot est devenu, depuis le XI^e siècle, l'équivalent de baron.

Then, speaking of the fourth meaning of the word *pair*, that is, its application at one and the same time to *homme* and *seigneur*, Lot adds:

Les historiens et les juristes (Championnière, Lehuierou, Flach, I, p. 231 etc.) n'ont pas saisi cette signification particulière du mot pair. Ils n'ont pas vu qu'il s'agissait d'une relation de seigneur à vassal et ont cru à une relation d'égal à égal. Tous les pairs auraient ainsi formé une sorte d'association de secours mutuel. Ils ont bâti ainsi toute une théorie juridique, qui, n'étant fondée que sur des textes mal interprétés, ne tient naturellement pas debout.¹⁷

The impossibility of the juxtaposition of two men as equals is well illustrated by the *Quatre Fils Aymon*. Born of the same mother, no one of them distinguished above the others by title or office, an equality of mutual relation might have existed among the four brothers. Or lacking that equality, the eldest son, from the dignity of his age, might have seemed

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35, note 4. Cf. G. Monod (*Revue historique*, LII, 1893, p. 446): Cette seconde partie . . . pourra donner lieu à d'assez graves critiques. On reprochera surtout à M. Flach d'avoir accordé une importance trop exclusive à des textes poétiques . . . on lui reprochera de ne point tenir compte des institutions politiques et militaires des Carolingiens, et des usurpations des fonctionnaires, d'avoir méconnu l'importance du rôle des bénéfices dès le IX^e siècle. On sera étonné de ne trouver presque nulle part cités les textes législatifs du VIII^e et du IX^e siècle, et on pensera que le rôle inconscient des forces sociales spontanées a été singulièrement exagéré. And also, the criticism of C. Pfister (*Revue historique*, LIII 1893, pp. 366-7): M. Flach défait la société . . . et il la reconstitue presque de toutes pièces . . . il a défait, en plein X^e siècle, la société, et il l'a refaite par la protection. And *ibid.*, p. 358, note 1: Parfois M. Flach a détourné les textes de leur sens, en les citant isolément et en les détachant de leur cadre; ainsi, dans les Capitulaires de Meerssen, le mot pair désigne non pas les vassaux ayant juré fidélité à un même suzerain, mais bien les trois frères-rois présents à l'entrevue.

As Flach was born in 1846, this article on *Compagnonnage* in 1890 represents the best results of this noted legal historian's work at his maturity.

entitled to assume the authority. But such was not the case; this happened to be contrary to the exigencies of those times. And Renaud, because of his valiant and energetic disposition, took precedence over his eldest brother, Alard, and exercised full authority with regard to all the rest.¹⁸

A seeming contradiction of this system of superimposed strata in society is found in the expression *frères d'armes*, the fraternity of arms. But the term *frères d'armes* does not signify equality of two men in respect to each other, nor any mutual devotion of two men so related. What is conveyed by the term is adequately stated by the learned Du Cange in his definition of *fratres armorum*: *Fratres armorum, Qui sub eodem vexillo militabant*.¹⁹ The *Fratres armorum* are soldiers that fight under one standard, and serve one lord. Such a grouping of warriors equal in respect to each other only by reason of their individual subjection to a master under whom they serve, is described in the twenty-first Dissertation of Du Cange.²⁰ The grouping together of these men in one common bond does not imply any idea of devotion to one another, but is due to the obligation of service that each one owes to the lord holding authority over them. A full comprehension of the cogency of this primal fact in its bearing upon the social conditions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in France, is the essential basis for an adequate interpretation of the institutions and customs of the entire medieval period.

If anything further need be said in support of the conception of feudal society as a uniform mass of parts superimposed in ascending strata, Du Cange has given that final word by the fashion in which he defines *compares*: *Compares praeterea dicti Pares, inter se comparati respectu superioris domini*.²¹ Thus on every hand is pointed out authoritatively the fact that the feudal man-to-man relation was one of inferior to superior, and never of equal to equal.

¹⁸ *Chanson des Quatre Fils Aymon*, ed. Castets, Montpellier, 1909, p. 2.

¹⁹ DuCange, *Glossarium*, *sub voce*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, VII, *Dissertationes*, XXI, pp. 80 ff., *Des adoptions d'honneur en frère, et, par occasion, des frères d'armes*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, *sub voce*.

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II

Interworking with this first principle of the constitution of feudal society, that is, the hierarchical organization, is a second factor, namely, the resort to force as the arbiter of events. These two conceptions, the resultants of many and varied inscrutable causes, were themselves the pillars which, for a space of about two hundred years, maintained to a large degree intact the customs of feudal life in France. Never since the period of full feudalism in France has force occupied so dominant a place in the life of every individual coming within the wide range of its jurisdiction. In the period of French history here under consideration, force was unlimited and undefined with reference to any high moral standard. Right and wrong were recognized, of course, but they did not determine the application of force, since force was paramount. When the personal non-property relationship of *homme-à-seigneur* waned and disappeared in the tenth century, moral obligations ceased to be duly recognized, and their place in the counsels of men was usurped by the domination of expediency and physical strength.

This crude fact is demonstrated in the most tangible manner in those feudal epics which retain to an unusual degree the spirit of the epoch of the first general functioning of the land-tenure system. For example, the first branch of the *Quatre Fils Aymon*, which is occupied with the war between Beuves d'Aigremont and Charlemagne, notably embodies this idea of primitive force, barbarous in execution, and resorting to any kind of pretext for a motive.

In this poem, of the end of the twelfth century in its present form but of earlier composition, Charlemagne declares his intention of waging war on Beuves because the latter has refused to yield the homage demanded by Charlemagne. "If I can hold him in my power," says Charlemagne, "he shall be hung on high with no delay."²² The answer of Aymon is shrewd to the point of cunning, and in keeping with feudal motives.

²² *Quatre Fils Aymon*, vv. 69-70.

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"Sire," says Aymon, "may God aid you therein. But know well, emperor, that before you hold Aigremont and its gleaming towers, and before you work your pleasure upon the duke, you will have lost so many of your people that no man living will be able to count them, and you yourself, king, will be sore afflicted thereby. For the duke is no coward to flee basely; rather is he a bold and warlike knight, and has many friends who will not fail to aid him in his direst need."²³

And by dint of such reasoning, without regard to the justice of the matter, Charlemagne is tamed down to a less truculent course of action.

In the succeeding division of the same poem, which properly deals with the adventures of the four sons of Aymon, and is distinct from the opening episode concerning the quarrel of the emperor with Beuves d'Aigremont, the same method of reasoning is employed by the barons. Charlemagne has long persecuted the four sons of Aymon, and persists in his course in spite of the fact that the sympathy of many of his barons is with the oppressed sons. At last one of the barons appeals to Charlemagne for peace in this fashion:

"Sire, hear my advice. You have declared your will: now I will tell you something of my thought. You know how ably the counts have withstood you. Richard and Alard are of the best blood in France, and they are of a powerful family. They are relatives of Girard de Rousillon, of Doon of Nanteuil; the duke Beuves d'Aigremont was of their family. And they are cousins of Richard of Ruem, and of Estolt, the son of Odon. And Ogier and the archbishop Turpin are kinsmen of theirs, and I myself, my lord. And you need never think that if any of the four sons should come into our power, that I would hand them over to you. No, not I, nor any of the others whom I have mentioned to you. For the love of God, king, make peace with them. This war has lasted too long, and too many men have lost their lives."

When the king heard this, his blood ran hot, and his face reddened like glowing charcoal. And he ground his teeth and shook his head, so that there was not a man present, however powerful he might be, that did not tremble.²⁴

The extremes to which the application of force might be carried is well related in an episode in *Girbert de Metz*, where

²³ *Ibid.*, 74-84.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5549-5590.

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in a factional fight that arises in the king's court, the queen sympathizes with the Loherain family to the point of taking an active part.

"And the queen did no small havoc, for she held in her hand a keen sword, and when the wounded attempted to raise themselves up, the queen struck from behind, and brought them down dead upon the marble floor."²⁵

Some of the feudal epics are mere recitals of recourse to violence. The chanson of *Garin le Loherain* is a series of successive appeals to force of arms by two families in their struggle for supremacy. *Aye d'Avignon*, *Gui de Nanteuil*, *Aiol*, are replete with systematic violence finding vent in the duel, and in organized treachery. The poem of *Auberi le Bourgoing* depends for the chief action of its plot upon constant and unscrupulous exercise of physical superiority.

Against the predominance of force, there inhered even in the barbarity of the tenth century certain ameliorating influences working for some sort of restraint of the crude spirit of the people. First, of course, was the Church, which never ceased from the earliest times throughout the whole history of France to wield some stabilizing influence upon civil and domestic life. The occasional instances of the interference of the church in worldly matters that have come down in written record, such as the *trêve de Dieu* or the intervention in the election of monarchs, by no means define the vast influence that must have been exerted by the one unified, coördinated organization of the age. Whether or not the weight of this vast power was felt more in a civil than in a religious way, the fact is not altered that no consideration of the history of France can fail to recognize it. But possibly by reason of the fact that the religious influence of the Church in feudal times was rather intangible from the viewpoint of a man of that age, there is little direct reflection of it in the feudal poetry. And therefore this discussion is limited to the second of these two

²⁵ *Girbert de Metz*, ed. Stengel (*Romanische Studien*, ed. Boehmer, I, p. 521, Strassburg, 1875), *laisse XX*. Cf. similar scene in *Aiol*, ed. Normand and Raynaud, Paris, 1877, vv. 5989 ff.

influences that tended towards the regulation of the appeal to force.

This second power was the tradition of law that persisted from the time of Charlemagne, even in the period of primitive feudalism, when all the instruments of government used by Charlemagne to enforce the law had crumbled away, or had been diverted from the prerogatives of the crown. The conception of this trend was embodied in the word *loyauté*; not 'loyalty' in the modern sense of constant faithfulness, but rather in its etymological sense of regulation by law or custom. One vital phase of this tendency was the custom of formal disavowal of friendly relations that was supposed to precede recourse to brute force and open hostility in its most savage manifestations.

At the very beginning of the tenth century, the sources show the existence of a custom known by the symbol *festuca*, 'a straw,' through which was consummated the severance of friendly relations between *homme* and *seigneur*. The custom of breaking allegiance through the symbolism of a straw was connected in origin with the grant of a benefice by the same symbol. Just as the straw given by the *seigneur* to his *homme* was the token of the gift of a benefice, and later of a fief, so the return of the straw to the *seigneur* by the vassal became the sign of the renouncing of allegiance.

One of the earliest examples on record of the practice of this custom is found in the *Chronicle* of Ademar, who relates an incident in connection with the reign of Charles le Simple. According to this account, in the year 920,

the leaders of the Franks, being assembled together in the accustomed manner for the transacting of the public business of the kingdom, with unanimous agreement, for the reason that king Charles was of ignoble disposition, throwing straws from their hands, they rejected him, that he might no longer be their lord: and they left him alone in the midst of the field, being separated from him.²⁰

The ritual is identical in every instance where it is employed,

²⁰ *Ex Chronico Ademari Cabannensis, anno 920 (Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France, VIII, p. 233, Paris, 1871).*

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except that sometimes a twig, or a rod, or blades of grass, etc., are used in place of the straw.²⁷ In the poem of *Raoul de Cambrai* is found an example of this early custom. Raoul has struck his esquire Bernier with the piece of a broken spear, thus forfeiting the right to retain Bernier in his service. Then Bernier says:

"My lord Raoul, this our discussion is ended, by reason of the wrong that you have done me." And from between the links of his steel hauberk he took three tufts of ermine that he wore, and threw them towards Raoul, and said "Fellow, I defy you! Never say that I have betrayed you."²⁸

Until the twelfth century, this procedure by symbol of the *festuca* was restricted to the relations between *seigneur* and *homme*. In this century, however, it began to have a wider application, and with a more extended usage underwent a change in terminology. From this time on, the custom was known as *desfiance*, and the older symbol of the straw was made use of only in a figurative sense, as in the modern expression, *rompre la paille avec quelqu'un*, which in Middle French was *rompre le festu avec quelqu'un*.²⁹ \

Desfiance, from the Latin **diffidantia*, the formal breaking of faith or friendly relation between two men, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in France obtained general recognition. With the possible exception of homage, no other custom receives wider attention in feudal French literature than *desfiance*.³⁰ Historical instances of the working of the custom are related by Villehardouin,³¹ Mouskes,³² Beaumanoir,³³ and Froissart.³⁴

²⁷ Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*, 4th edition, Leipzig, 1899, I, pp. 168-190.

²⁸ *Raoul de Cambrai*, 2307-2318.

²⁹ Cf. Pasquier, *Recherches* VIII, 58.

³⁰ Cf. Du Cange, under *diffidare*, for other examples.

³¹ Villehardouin, *Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. N. de Wailly, Paris, 1909, sec. 207-215.

³² Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, 30852.

³³ Beaumanoir, *Coutumes du Beauvoisis*, ed. Beugnot, Paris, 1842, II, sec. 1680.

³⁴ Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, Bruxelles, 1868, IV, p. 43.

One of the clearest examples of this usage is found in Villehardouin, an episode of the year 1203. The emperor Alexis of Constantinople had broken his word in regard to a promise made to the French army. Then the barons held an assembly and declared that the emperor would never keep his promise, for never had he on any occasion told the truth. And they resolved to send worthy messengers to demand that he keep his word, and if he should not do so, he should be defied by them.

For this message were chosen Conon de Béthune and Geoffroi de Villehardouin, and other responsible men. And they came into the palace, and into the court of the emperor, and by the consent of the other messengers, Conon de Béthune spoke thus: "Sire, we come to you on behalf of the French army; you have sworn to them, as has your father, to keep the covenant that you have made with them, and they have your written compact. They have required it of you oftentimes, and we do require it of you again, that you keep the agreement which is between them and you. If you do that, there is peace: if you do it not, know that henceforth they will hold you neither for lord nor for friend, but they will endeavor to take what belongs to them by whatsoever means they may. And they remind you that they do not to you nor to any other man aught of harm before having defied him; for they have never done treason, and in their country it is not the way of men to do it. You have heard what we have said, and you will take counsel to do as you please."⁸⁵

The heinousness of the sin of omitting *desfiance* is expressed in a passage from the poem of *Auberi*, where the Duke of Dijon confronts Anseïs, who had plotted against his life without defying him:

The Duke looked at the wretched Anseïs, turned towards him, and spoke aloud: "Base traitor, you kissed me as my liegeman, and gave

⁸⁵ Villehardouin, sec. 207-15. Cf. in this connection *Lex Friderici imperatoris*, anno 1186 (*Burchardi et Cuonradi Urspergensium Chronicon*, p. 65, ed. Pertz, Hannover, 1874): *Statuimus etiam et eodem firmiter edicto sancimus, ut quicumque alii damnum facere laedere ipsum intendat, tribus ad minus ante diebus per certum nuncium suum diffiduciet eum.*

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me shelter in order to deliver me over to Huedon; never man that lived was guilty of such treason."⁸⁶

In the poem of the *Quatre Fils Aymon*, the two sons of Forque challenge the two sons of Renaud on the allegation that "*their father killed ours without making desfiance*."⁸⁷ The implication that with *desfiance* the act would have been legal is borne out by a passage from the *Gaydon*, in which it is related how Hertaud, having received Ferraud as a guest, plans to kill him. Hertaud discusses the plan with his wife:

And to her the proven traitor says: "Do you take this knight aside, and talk with him, amuse him, until I am clad in my armor. This is Ferraud, my mortal enemy, and, before God, I will not eat until I have severed his limbs from him."

The lady hears him, and her visage is changed thereat. "Sir," says she, "it would be disloyalty if you do him harm when you have lodged him; you would be forever called a traitor. But do rightly in this matter; give him back his armor, and set him on the road, then defy him. You will incur no blame if after that you slay him."⁸⁸

In similar circumstances to the above, the poem of *Aiol* gives an instance where a wife urges the observance of *desfiance* even more forcibly. The husband has just stated his intention of slaying his guest:

"What do you say, you devil incarnate? Have you gone mad? You have lodged the barons in legal fashion, and have drunk and eaten with them! You will start a feud that will end by your being hanged like a common robber, and your sons will be torn to pieces by horses, and I will be burned alive. God confound them if they do not cut off your head, unless you abandon your intention. By Saint Paul I shall tell them. Though my limbs were severed from my body, I would not consent to such treason."⁸⁹

The causes for *desfiance* were numerous. In the *Gaydon* is to be found another pretext sufficient for the purpose here.

⁸⁶ *Auberi*, ed. Tobler, Leipzig, 1870, p. 240. Cf. *Hugues Capet*, ed. La Grange, Paris, 1864, v. 1050. Also *Gérard de Rossillon*, ed. Francisque-Michel, Paris, 1856, p. 304, vv. 11-12.

⁸⁷ *Quatre Fils Aymon*, 17291.

⁸⁸ *Gaydon*, ed. Guessard and Lucé, Paris, 1862, vv. 4235-4248.

⁸⁹ *Aiol*, 7240-7256.

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Gaydon wishes the king to drive the family of traitors from the court, and Riol advises him:

"Sire, command king Charles to give into our hands the treacherous family; let him banish them and confiscate their lands. And if he holds them against your will, defy him, and renounce your homage."⁴⁰

Since private warfare in the earliest period of feudalism was the privilege of every man, any cause that might arouse anger between two men was occasion sufficient for *desfiance*. Examples of the usage are constantly at hand in the feudal poetry. The absence of the procedure in any poem is evidence that that poem is unusually primitive in composition. In this connection it is to be noted that in regard to certain of the chansons that in the preceding chapter have been indicated as pre-feudal, the absence of *desfiance* confirms the opinion of their age. There is no mention whatsoever of *desfiance* in the *Gormund et Isembard*. In the *Raoul de Cambrai*, there is no mention of *desfiance* before Raoul invades the Vermandois. In fact, even after Raoul has laid waste much of their country, the four sons of Herbert do not know that Raoul is advancing upon them.⁴¹

In the *Floovant*, the verb form *deffi* occurs, but apparently in the sense only of the modern 'defy': upon attacking another man, one warrior cries out "*Straightway do I defy you with my Turkish sword.*"⁴² The case, however, is not so certain as it is with regard to the *Gormund et Isembard* and the *Raoul de Cambrai*, in which there can be no question as to the absence of any reference to *desfiance*.

When *desfiance* had been regularly made, the results, as a general rule, might be of three kinds: (1) private warfare; (2) individual execution of vengeance; (3) the duel.

War was the outcome of the instance related by Villehardouin. Likewise, in the *Beuves d'Aigremont*, the opening

⁴⁰ Gaydon, 3082-3087.

⁴¹ Cf. *Raoul de Cambrai*, 2305. Raoul says: *Ne lor faut guerre, de ma part les desfi!* This is not *desfiance*, but merely insolence on the part of Raoul, being said after Raoul has engaged in active hostility against the four sons of Herbert.

⁴² *Floovant*, 1157.

episode of the *Quatre Fils Aymon*, a messenger sent by the king announces to Beuves that if he fail to pay homage as demanded, a state of war is to exist forthwith.⁴³

The second fashion of procedure, that of individual vengeance, might take form in the murder of one of the parties, as in the *Auberi*, where Gascelin comes upon his enemy to slay him as he prays.⁴⁴ And Gascelin is adjudged guiltless.

A third result manifests that resort to force which is inseparably identified with the feudal epoch. Particularly in the cases of personal injury, or the challenging of a witness, *desfiance* was very apt to be followed by a duel between the two men, though not necessarily.

The historical duel is well illustrated by the following example from the *Wiponis Vita Chuonradi*, in the year 1033.⁴⁵ According to this account,

between the Saxons and the pagans at that time, fighting and raids were being carried on incessantly, and when the emperor came to investigate, he began to inquire which side had first broken the peace that had long been observed inviolate between them. The pagans said that the peace had first been disturbed by the Saxons, and they would prove this by the duel, if the emperor would so direct. On the other hand the Saxons pledged themselves to refute the pagans in like manner by single combat, though as a matter of fact their contention was untrue. The emperor after consulting his lords permitted the matter to be settled between them by a duel.

Two champions, each selected by his own side, immediately engaged. Finally the Christian fell wounded by the pagan. Thereupon his party was seized with such presumption and elation, that, had the emperor not been present, they would forthwith have rushed upon the Christians.⁴⁶

One of the earliest poetry indications of this duel is found in the *Floovant*. This seems to be prior to the period of formal

⁴³ *Quatre Fils Aymon*, 214-238. Cf. *Fierabras*, ed. Guessard, Paris, 1860, vv. 5479 ff.

⁴⁴ *Auberi*, ed. Tarbé, pp. 117 ff.

⁴⁵ *Wiponis Vita Chuonradi* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, XI, p. 271, cap. 33, anno 1033).

⁴⁶ Cf. Pfeffer, *Die Formalitäten des gottesgerichtlichen Zweikampfs in der altfranzösischen Epik* (*Zeitschrift für romanische Literatur*, IX, 1885, pp. 1-74). This is an excellent analysis of the judicial duel, with citation of poetical examples for each phase.

desfiance, but the conception that might is the sole arbiter, is very evidently revealed in the readiness of the aggrieved party to place reliance on the duel for just amend.

In this poetical example of the trust in strength, a warrior, Richier, is depicted as having unwittingly slain the son of his host. The host, Emelons, charges his guest:

"Vassal, you have villainously treated me; I only had one dear son, and through your pride you have slain him. Forthwith shall I cut your limbs from your body."⁴⁷

Richier pleads his innocence of any evil intent:

"By the faith that I owe you," says Richier, "I will not lie to you. This morning I was wandering through the forest when I met a knight who rode towards me with a strong following. So insolent was he that he would not speak with me, but struck me a great blow upon my shield, and be assured I struck him back straightway. But know you that I killed him against my will, for otherwise he had slain me."⁴⁸

When Emelons hears that, he knows not what he should say, then he bespeaks Richier after this wise, "Vassal, will you stand proof that you are right?"

"Yes," says Richier; and they give mutual pledge that the battle shall take place with no delay.⁴⁹

In the fray that follows, Emelons is defeated, and when his life is spared, he promptly yields to the justice incident to the trial by arms.

"Vassal," says Emelons, "you are a right worthy man, and your great valor has subdued my pride. Assuredly, friend, I pardon you the death of my dear son."⁵⁰

In the *Aye d'Avignon*, mortal enmity is aroused between Berengier and Garnier when the king gives to Garnier a wife whom Berengier also coveted before her marriage. Berengier persuades a kinsman of his, Amauguin, to charge Garnier with treason.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Floovant*, 1046-1049.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1060-1068.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1087-1093.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1191-1194.

⁵¹ Cf. the duel in *Garin le Loherain*, II, pp. 25 ff.

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And Amauguin commenced his speech thus: "Emperor, hear what we shall tell you. My brother and I were seated on the marble steps at Verberie, when Garnier began to say to us, 'My lords, what shall we do? This king is exceedingly base and treacherous, and is a cowardly and senseless knave; right little of our ancestral fiefs has he left us. I am like to slay him in the presence of the whole army, or in forest or river, or where else we may.'"⁵²

Then the king made the counts to come before him,⁵³ and in this official court, the accusation is repeated against Garnier, the false charge being made this time by Auboin, another one of the epic Family of Traitors. And when Auboin ceases to speak,

Garnier replies, "Treacherous enemy, if I live and God help me, I will make you take back your slander."⁵⁴

Then they give their pledges, and the king receives them.⁵⁵ The exact nature of these pledges is shown with more detail in the description of a similar scene in *Gaydon*, when Gaydon stands before Charlemagne accused falsely of treason.

"Vassal," says Charlemagne, "give me your hostages and delay not; else harm will come to you of it. I will have your right hand cut off, with which you gave me your pledge."⁵⁶

Here the word for *pledge*, *gaige*, is the same as in the preceding passage from the *Aye d'Avignon*. This pledge, or *gaige*, is merely some formal token of the challenge, for example a glove. But as the instance in the *Gaydon* shows, it had to be followed with the giving of hostages. In the *Gaydon* passage under discussion, Charlemagne continues thus:

"Whoever goes hostage for you risks being torn asunder, and his body burned and cast to the winds." And when the French heard their lord threaten so, not one speaks, except those upon whom it is a necessity to offer themselves, namely, the vassals of Gaydon bound to him by reason of the fiefs they hold of him.

⁵² *Aye d'Avignon*, 233-249.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 259-260.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 280-281.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 282.

⁵⁶ *Gaydon*, 625-659.

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So Rispeus of Nantes, and Joiffois, and Guy de Biaufort, and the valiant Riol step forward and offer themselves as hostages, saying, "Sire, take us as pledge, first upon our fiefs, and then upon our lives; for if he is vanquished we wish to live no longer."

But Charlemagne replies, "Stand back! You are all his liege-men, and a man who is accused of treason cannot offer his vassal in hostage."

Finally Naynmon of Bavaria offers himself as hostage, and Charlemagne replies:

"Naynmon, it shall be as you will."⁵⁷

After either side have given their hostages to the king, it is agreed that the battle will be on the morrow, for the pledges have been duly given.⁵⁸

Until the battle takes place, both men are under the most strict surveillance. More than ever are they held to account with regard to the *congié*, or obligation devolving upon them to secure permission to leave the court of the king, or superior lord, no matter what the occasion might be. This custom of requesting *congié* was in effect at all times, but doubly so in a moment like this, when a man was considered guilty of treacherous intent if he departed from the court without formal permission being sought and granted. In the *Gaydon* is shown how serious the offense was of waiving *congié*. Renaud expresses the king's will in these words:

"Charlemagne summons Gaydon to come to him at Paris, and beg his mercy, and amend that in which he has done wrong. For he departed rashly from his court without requesting *congié*."⁵⁹

In the *Raoul de Cambrai*, the setting aside *congié* is equivalent to a declaration of war. Bernier, insulted by Raoul, cries:

"Bring me my arms and my hauberk, my good sword and my helmet! From this court I depart without *congié*!"⁶⁰

And straightway Bernier goes over to the hostile camp, and engages in war with Raoul.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 718-722.

⁵⁸ *Aye d'Avignon*, 282.

⁵⁹ *Gaydon*, 3146-3154.

⁶⁰ *Raoul de Cambrai*, 1725-1727.

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After hostages had been given, and the duel arranged for the next day, the next step in the procedure incident to the duel was the watching and praying in the church. In *Aye d'Avignon* is related how

Garnier keeps his watch, and the bishop Morise chants the mass, and Garnier makes a gift to the church of a hundred pieces of silver.⁶¹

After the church service the two warriors each swear on the sacred relics that his cause is just. The account of the ceremony of oath-taking in the duel of the two sons of Forque with the two sons of Renaud in the *Quatre Fils Aymon* is especially relevant:

"My lords, you must now swear upon the sacred relics, for such is the law." Then the traitors come forward and kneel, and swear by the sacred relics that Renaud killed their father through treason. Then kiss they the relics, and arise and turn back. But even as they turn, they both stagger, and the whole court sees them come nigh to falling, save that they bear each other up. And Roland says to those who behold it. "Surely this is a poor pledge of victory."

Then the two sons of Renaud come forward, and kiss the relics, and swear that the sons of Forque have lied concerning this treason. And they arise upright, and go back."⁶²

In the morning arrangements are made for the duel. The field of combat is guarded by a hundred of the king's men, to prevent interference by one side or the other. In the historical instance cited above from the *Wiponis Vita Chuonradi*, there is shown the danger that one side may rush to the assistance of their champion, or may follow up his victory with a general onslaught. So in the body of the feudal poetry, the duel that is not interrupted by treachery of one of the parties is an exception.⁶³

In the chanson of *Gaydon* elaborate preliminaries take place on either side with this object in view. The passage in question relates how

⁶¹ *Aye d'Avignon*, 344-346. Cf. Auberi, ed. Tarbé, p. 138, vv. 6 ff.

⁶² *Quatre Fils Aymon*, 17293-17317.

⁶³ Cf. *Gui de Nanteuil*, ed. Meyer, Paris, 1861, 1093 ff.

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Guy d'Autefoille assembles a hundred of the Family of Traitors, who plan to set an ambush of a thousand men so that if they see their champion, Guion, defeated in the conflict, they may rush forth and slay his opponent, Ferraud.⁶⁴

Likewise the friends of Ferraud in their turn prepare for the combat. Riol summons his friends:

"Let us take two thousand men, and ambush them in yonder woods. And when Ferraud fights his duel, if any other than Guion do him harm, we will aid him without delay."⁶⁵

In the *Aye d'Avignon*, however, no formalities occur prior to the duel, but when it becomes evident to the traitors that their champion is on the verge of defeat, they are not loath to lend him aid.

Achard and Hondré, who were his kinsmen, rush into the field with thirty of their men. And they had slain Garnier straightway, were it not for the king's guards, who are more than a hundred. For they quickly engage the traitors, slay twenty-two of them, and cast the remaining eight into prison.⁶⁶

Thereupon the duel is resumed. Garnier is victorious, and Auboïn pleads guilty:

"Strike me not again, gentle lord, and I will confess the whole treason."⁶⁷

Then king Charles, who as lord of both men has ultimate authority, passes judgment in this wise:

"Barons, take this knave, and the eight men from the prison, who charged Garnier with treason, and wished to kill him; for it is but right that each of them shall have his reward."⁶⁸

After which Auboïn and the eight survivors of those who intervened on his behalf are put to death.

The account of this duel in the *Aye d'Avignon* is not explicit

⁶⁴ Gaydon, 5782-5796. Cf. *Gui de Nanteuil*, 966 ff.

⁶⁵ Gaydon, 6317-6324.

⁶⁶ *Aye d'Avignon*, 635-646.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 673-674.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 713-717.

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as regards the fate of the hostages. The customary procedure is indicated, however, in the *Gaydon*, where the traitors save the lives of the bondsmen only by bribing the king with rich presents.

The purpose of the present chapter, as in the case of the preceding, has been to point out the parallel between the historical data and the early French poetic material.

If feudalism in England was in general limited to the employment of the land tenure system, and in Germany, Italy, and Spain (or perhaps better Aragon), emphasized chiefly the political independence of the barons, in France feudalism attained more than in all these countries a normal and unhindered development. Therefore the feudal poetry of France, revealing an intimate portraiture of the private life of the period, affords the most valuable field of investigation in literature of the workings of the social forces of feudalism.

out of the dim traditions of the past? The poet who composed toward the end of the tenth century called his king Charlemagne, perhaps, but his model was Hugues Capet. And though the names of the barons came down, some of them, from the seventh or eighth century, the living men described by the poet were the rebellious nobles of the reign of Hugues Capet. When the poet depicts Charlemagne in despicable, contemptible weakness, he is only picturing the feeble king whom he saw at the mercy of his vassals. The accuracy of the feudal epic with respect to social institutions discloses, as no analogy with historical events could do, the fact that the poet drew men as he saw them. This is in sharp contrast with the vague and romantic treatment of the later *romans d'aventure*.

Consider these two points in their relation to each other: the feudal poetry is an accurate and unconscious portrayal; it is likewise a portrayal of the period of its composition, and of the years immediately preceding. So much has been shown conclusively by the present study. The conclusion is obvious: if the manners and institutions can be assigned definitely to certain epochs in the social and political development of France as recorded in the chronicles and other historical documents, the poems fixed in these periods by the direct reflection they give of the society in which they originated may be dated with greater accuracy than by the study of manuscripts and the search for parallel historical events. Such has been the result of the present investigation. Its bearing on the poems may be mentioned in résumé as follows. These poems have been mentioned above in three groups, according to the degree of their feudal content: the listing here is made in four groups, with reference to the age of each poem.

In the ninth century were composed *Floovant*, *Couronnement de Louis*, *Bewes d'Aigremont*, *Gormund et Isembard*. In the tenth century were composed *Raoul de Cambrai* and *Auberi le Bourgoing*. In the first half of the eleventh century are to be placed *Garin le Loherain*, and *Mort Garin*; and, in the last half of the same century, *Gerbert de Metz*, and *Anseïs de Metz*. The poems of the twelfth century, in ap-

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proximate order of composition, are the following: *Aye d'Avignon*, *Quatre Fils Aymon*, *Aiol*, *Gérard de Rossillon*, *Ogier*, *Guy de Nanteuil*, *Guy de Bourgogne*, *Otinel*, *Gaydon*, *Hervis de Metz*.

II

By way of summing up, it is pertinent to devote a few words to the bearing of this study on the hypothesis developed by M. Joseph Bédier in his work entitled *Les Légendes épiques*, the first of the four volumes having appeared in 1908, and the last in 1913 (second edition, vol. I, 1914)). Bédier's work has been reviewed, of course, but prior to this time there has been made no new systematic analysis of the material of the French epic with regard to its bearing on Bédier's hypothesis. To make such an investigation has been the object of the present study. A few words are therefore apposite with regard to the relation of the conclusions reached in this study to the validity of Bédier's argument.

At the outset, as a basis for the discussion, the broad lines of Bédier's hypothesis may be summarized as follows: The most ancient *chansons de geste*, those which have a true historical foundation in the remote past, do not go back by an unbroken tradition of epic chansons to the time, or nearly to the epoch, of the events they recount. So much of Bédier's work is purely negative—he discredits the theory generally held (almost without exception) until Bédier produced his *Légendes épiques*. This is undoubtedly the most valuable part of the work. In it Bédier attacks opinions that have existed without sufficient *raison d'être*, that have become fixed merely because of their traditional authority. He shows plainly the weakness of the grandiose conception of the *cantilène*, and stimulates new interest in the subject. There remains to be considered the system that Bédier has attempted to establish in the place of the theory he has discredited. Having determined to his satisfaction that there is in the poetry no element, save some historical analogy, which need go back of the twelfth century for explanation, Bédier sets out to seek "dans la vie du XII^e

siècle des circonstances et des conditions propres à expliquer la formation de la légende." These "circonstances" Bédier finds in the pilgrimages to holy places, and in the Church fairs, both springing up in sudden vigor about the end of the eleventh century. And the *chansons de geste* originated then, in the twelfth century, or at the earliest, the end of the eleventh, being composed by jongleurs who made their living best along the pilgrimage routes, and at the Church fairs: and the material, or at any rate the historical element of it, was furnished to the jongleurs by the monks who wished to advertise their shrines to the pilgrims and fairgoers.

First a few words as to the method by which Bédier clears the field to make room for his theory. I quote from G. Huet who has given a keen analysis of the subject in the *Moyen-Age* for 1908, and again in the number of 1913: "D'abord, l'auteur semble considérer la théorie qu'il combat, celle de chants épiques, transmettant aux hommes du XI^e siècle le souvenir d'événements du temps de Charlemagne ou même antérieurs, sinon comme absolument chimérique, du moins comme d'une invraisemblance extrême, comme une hypothèse à laquelle il ne faudrait avoir recours que dans des cas absolument désespérés, tous les autres moyens d'explication faisant défaut. Cette méfiance me semble exagérée. Un chant épique, une fois qu'il existe, peut avoir la vie dure: on sait que des chants du cycle des Niebelungen vivaient encore, dans la bouche du peuple, aux îles Féroë, dans le premier quart du XIX^e siècle."¹

Although Bédier has set forth his work in the form of an hypothesis, he closes the door to the investigations of others in no undecided way: "L'ère des recherches doit être tenue pour close ou elle ne le sera jamais."² Apropos of which H. Suchier suggests: "Auch war wohl der Wunsch der Vater des Gedankens, wenn Bédier die Vermutung ausspricht 'L'ère des recherches doit être tenue pour close ou elle ne le sera jamais'; ich glaube jenes nicht, halte vielmehr die zweite Alternative für richtig. Trotz Bédiers spottender Kritik wird wahrschein-

¹ *Moyen Age*, 1908, p. 339.

² *Légendes épiques*, I, 17 (2d ed.).

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lich noch manche frappante Ähnlichkeit zwischen Geschichte und Dichtung gefunden werden, je tiefer in die Geschichte eingedrungen und je mehr von Chansontexten ans Licht befördert wird."³ It is with the belief so expressed by Suchier that the present study has been taken up, a study that the writer hopes to continue in the future with greater detail, when time permits.

For the present there may be suggested a few points in which Bédier has reached conclusions on insufficient evidence, or has failed to anticipate difficulties that oppose his hypothesis. Our view must be limited, but within even so small a compass may be shown enough to suggest what will be the nature of a more searching study of the material.

At the outset of volume III. (p. 4), Bédier inquires: "Pourquoi des poètes du XII^e siècle ont-ils pris pour héros de leurs romans des hommes morts depuis tant de siècles?" In this question, says Bédier, "tient tout le problème de l'origine des chansons de geste." The problem is not of such sweeping importance with regard to the *origin*, or the *age* of the poetry. Would Bédier also ask why the modern novel writers sometimes make use of historical material? Would he ask why Vergil put his epic in antiquity? Was Homer an eye-witness of the deeds he narrates? The historical epic is the customary form, while an epic composed by a contemporary of the events narrated is rare.⁴ Bédier's question is of no import in connection with the problem of the origin of the poetry.

In similar fashion Bédier discusses *reworkings* of the epic material.⁵ There is no apparent connection with the *formation*. This may be considered an epitome of Bédier's work: it is the period of the renewing and modification in the twelfth century that he has mistaken for the time of the formation of the epic poetry. To quote Tavernier: "Vier Bände voller Sagen sollen nur das Interesse der Ependichter des 12. Jahrhunderts an den Helden der Merowinger- und Karolingerzeit begrün-

³ *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, XXXII, 1908, 736-737.

⁴ Cf. W. Tavernier, *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen*, CXXXI, 1913, pp. 187-188.

⁵ Vol. III, pp. 140 ff.

den; aber das erklärt sich ohne Sagen besser und einfacher, wenn das Interesse fühlsamer Dichterseelen für grosse und tapfere Menschen auch der Vergangenheit überhaupt einer 'Erklärung' bedarf . . . vier Bände voll *Légendes épiques*, um das Interesse gebildeter Dichter an Persönlichkeiten wie Karl dem Grossen zu erklären!⁶ "D'autre part," says G. Huet, discussing the same matter, "il est certain que l'épopée peut, d'elle-même et sans secours extérieurs, conserver le souvenir de personnages et de faits historiques. C'est ainsi que—fait bien connu, mais particulièrement frappant pour le problème qui nous occupe—Théodoric le Grand a été célébré, sous le nom de Dietrich von Bern, par l'épopée allemande durant tout le moyen-âge; le *Hildebrandslied*, que les germanistes placent au VIII^e siècle, garde le souvenir de sa lutte contre Odoacre. Ce n'est certainement pas l'Église qui s'est chargée de perpétuer, par des pèlerinages et des exhibitions de reliques, la mémoire de ce roi, pilier de l'Arianisme."⁷

Huet concludes (p. 343) that "les faits réunis par M. B. prouvent que, dès une époque très ancienne, clercs et moines d'un côté, jongleurs de l'autre, se sont entendus pour exploiter les traditions carolingiennes; mais ils ne prouvent pas, avec une certitude absolue, que l'origine *première* de ces traditions fût cléricale ou monastique, les mentions d'églises ou de monastères ayant pu être introduites dans les chansons après coup, lors du renouvellement du texte primitif." In similar fashion E. Bourciez, in the *Revue critique*,⁸ expresses his conviction that Bédier does demonstrate that the action in certain poems may be localized with some exactness, as in the *Raoul* about the church of Saint-Géri, and the monasteries of Cambrésis or of Vermandois. Also that Bédier shows in regard to the *chansons de geste* dealing with Italy, that out of ninety names of towns mentioned, seventy are on the Via francigena; the others are fantastic names impossible to localize, or names of a few great cities that no one could fail to know, even with-

⁶ Cf. Tavernier, *supra*, pp. 210-211.

⁷ *Moyen Age*, 1908, p. 340.

⁸ LXVII, 1909, pp. 72-73.

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out having passed that way. Also, in the large towns, such as Naples or Milan, there is no important action; if they are mentioned, it is in an incidental and vague manner. It is therefore impossible, says Bourciez, to deny the close connection between the *romans* and "le grand mouvement de la foi religieuse qui entraîna les pèlerins au moyen âge." In our opinion the last statement should be qualified somewhat: it is impossible to deny the close relation between the knowledge of geography, *particularly outside of France*, with the increasing prominence of the pilgrimage routes at the beginning of the twelfth century. And the connection is closer than had been realized before Bédier—the connection, that is, of the poems written after the year 1100 with the view of exploiting pilgrimages and fairs. But in the light of the present investigation, the theory of this connection in no wise holds true, for the ten poems certainly composed prior to the end of the eleventh century, namely, the following: *Floovant, Bewves d'Aigremont, Couronnement de Louis, Gormund et Isembard, Raoul de Cambrai, Auberi le Bourgoing, Garin le Loherain, Mort Garin, Gerbert de Metz, Anseïs de Metz*. The geographical details in the above poems depend on no pilgrimage routes.

On the other hand, there are certain centers of fairs, as the church of Saint-Géri at Cambrai in the *Raoul de Cambrai*. To consider this typical example for a moment: just what is the significance of the frequent mention of the church of Saint-Géri in this poem? In the first place the poem discusses no saints and no relics. It is the versified narration of a tradition of the general Picard district, centered at Cambrai especially, but also at Saint-Quentin and Origny. The details of the geography are exact. The poet probably lived in the district: at least he is intimately acquainted with the region. Suppose that he had no interest in the church. Would it be remarkable that in the narration of a story traditional in the neighborhood he should cast a part of the action around the village church? It does not seem surprising or in need of being explained, when the nature of the events connected with the church is consid-

ered. The marriage service, the burial service, the vigil on the night before a duel, are things properly to be performed in a church, and such are the usual church elements. In the poem of *Raoul de Cambrai* account should be taken, in addition, of the availability of Géri as a rime word—the rime in *i* being very facile, if not the most so. It seems more probable therefore that the church is mentioned because it is in the Cambrésis district than that the action of the poem is in the Cambrésis district because the church was there. Bédier himself admits with reference to one poem that the church probably was not the originator of the legend; that the monks of Saint-Faron began celebrating the tomb of an Ogier only after Ogier had become famous in the *chanson* which bears his name.⁹ Furthermore, if the poem was to celebrate the church, it might reasonably be expected that the poet would relate the life of Saint-Géri, or some other legend of saintly tradition. Not necessarily in this single instance perhaps, but it is a noteworthy fact that in the whole body of the epic poetry, the poem celebrating supposedly a certain church, the resting place of a saint, or saintly relics, never recounts the life of the saint in question or the story of the relics, but always the deeds of some local hero—and frequently heroes little worthy of being perpetuated in memory by the church. Raoul de Cambrai, the brutal, savage, untamed warrior, the desecrator of the church, and murderer of devoted nuns—this is the hero whose vile deeds inspired, Bédier insists, the monks of Cambrai to perpetuate his memory in a *chanson* of praise, with scarce the suggestion of condemnation for his heathen savagery. There is no need of explanation, however, when it is admitted that the part the church plays in the poem is only an incidental result of the locality in which it is found.¹⁰

This problem of the towns that are not on pilgrimage routes and yet play a conspicuous part in the poetry, is met ingeniously by Bédier, but not with entire success. Aix-la-Chapelle and Paris are mentioned, for instance, because of the presence

⁹ *Légendes épiques*, II, 293.

¹⁰ Cf. G. Huet, *Moyen Age*, 1913, pp. 427-8.

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in these towns of relics that Charlemagne was supposed to have brought from the Orient, the memory of which was to be perpetuated by the *chansons* composed for the occasion. The inevitable exception is the city of Laon, which also plays an important part in the poetry as one of Charlemagne's capitals. And it is to be constantly kept in mind that by the nature of Bédier's hypothesis a single exception to the rule is fatal to the whole structure. Bédier maintains that each individual poem conforms to his theory, that each tradition came into poetic form through the monkish and jongleuresque collaboration. Now, in many of the *chansons de geste* Charlemagne and Louis le Debonnaire hold their court at Laon. Laon is not mentioned, as are Aix-la-Chapelle and Paris, with reference to the relics distributed by Charlemagne; on the other hand, Laon was the capital, in the tenth century, of the last of the Carolingians. It follows that there was a direct tradition deriving from the epoch when the Carolingians actually had Laon for Capital. Thus is further indicated the failure of Bédier's general conclusions when applied to particular instances.¹¹

A flaw in the Bédier hypothesis that cannot be explained away is pronounced in convincing terms by W. Foerster in his review of the work:¹² "Wie ist dies möglich, da die ältesten Epen (Roland und Willame), die sicher spätestens ins gute 11. Jahrh. fallen, uns bereits in einem sehr überarbeiteten, arg zugerichteten Zustand mehrfacher Umarbeitung überkommen sind! Da müssen sie doch vor dieser Zeit längst bestanden haben. Noch mehr, diese ältesten Epen zeigen bereits eine ganz ausgebildete, feststehende Technik, eigene epischen Stil auf, alles Dinge, die nicht auf einmal von selbst entstehen, sondern nur das Ergebnis einer langen, langsamen, allmählichen Entwicklung, die viel länger als ein Jahrhundert sein muss, sein können. Es ist ganz sicher anzunehmen, dass der so gründliche, vorsichtige und scharfsinnige Verfasser diese Schwierigkeiten auch seinerseits empfunden haben muss. Er

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 431.

¹² *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland*, 1908, 27 Juni.

erwähnt sie zwar nirgends, aber er muss sich wohl mit ihnen abgefunden haben, da er sonst seine ikonoklastische Hypothese nicht mit solchem Riesenapparat in die Welt gesetzt hätte."¹⁸

In such instances as the above, Professor Bédier would seem to have cleverly avoided the discussion of considerations damaging to his own theory. He is not everywhere so successful, however. In his last volume (IV, 364 ff.) he gives a list of personages of the *chansons de geste*. Consider the first group of names, twelve great personages "dont il est indifférent de localiser ici ou là la légende," says Bédier. The poets got their impression "au hasard de leurs conversations, de leurs lectures, de leurs promenades" (IV, 380). "De leurs lectures"! But Bédier has already assured us (p. 368) that "nos romanciers étaient gens de médiocre culture, et il est inadmissible, nous le reconnaissons pleinement, qu'ils aient extrait des chroniques latines les matériaux de leurs romans." But pass the contradiction to consider what manner of men these jongleurs must have been. They spent their afternoons whiling away the time reading books on the life of Charlemagne and Charles Martel; they were antiquarians who borrowed a story here and there from the monks, or bribed some cleric for a few hours use of the church records, talked of the accounts found in these Latin chronicles on their evening walks—and suddenly, in the year 1100 or thereabouts, composed a series of poetic works, varying from three thousand to thirty thousand lines in length, to advertise the monasteries at whose behest they wrote. Possibly, if they were merely from incidental daily conversation so well acquainted with twelve of the great heroes of antiquity, they may have known even more than twelve. It is a rare historical name that survives without a single other name or event of some sort attached to it. If Charlemagne's name came down in general tradition, as Bédier himself thus implies, it came with certain elements of romantic nature attached to it, brave deeds, no doubt, and the stories of the men who fought for him, or of

¹⁸ Cf. also Huet, *Moyen Age*, 1913, p. 428; and *ibid.*, p. 429, relative to the Provençal *Boèce*.

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those who dared to oppose him. And if this much could be transmitted—and Bédier does not deny it—without the aid of the monks, is it necessary that the jongleurs should have awaited the call of the church to sing their profane legends? And did the clerics also furnish, already perfected, the artistic style and distinctive phraseology of the *chansons*? “Die Entstehung der *Chansons de geste* hat B. nicht erklärt; das gibt er selbst ausdrücklich zu.” Such is Tavernier’s opinion.¹⁴ Bédier himself admits that the mass of facts he has brought together “ne sauraient suffire à expliquer la formation des chansons de geste:”¹⁵ ce n’en est pas non plus la formation qu’ils prétendent expliquer, c’en est seulement l’élément historique.” And “l’histoire tient peu de place” in these poems. It is possible to agree with Bédier entirely here; it has been repeatedly emphasized in this study that the poems do not concern themselves with historical events. One may even say with Bédier (IV, 399-400) “N’est-il pas remarquable que, dans tout le vaste cycle des Lorrains, à part de Charles Martel, Pépin, et quelques acteurs d’arrière-plan, comme Heloïs, il n’y ait pas un seul personnage historique?” It is remarkable that the poet, having waited until the year 1100 to receive historical data from the churches, finally writes his vast work, as Bédier himself admits, without showing the slightest results of this intercourse with the monks! It is a fact well worthy of note that Bédier finds no support for his hypothesis in the poem of *Garin le Loherain*—for the author of this poem had a knowledge of geography that surpasses anything to be found in any other production of the whole body of the epic poetry. Bédier, however, finds no church influence in the geographical details, nor, for that matter, in any phase of this poem. It is a pertinent comment on Bédier’s hypothesis that his strongest reliance is in poems obviously of late romantic origin, which have no pretense to geographical exactness. It might be expected that Bédier would find a wealth of material in a poem so rich in details of place-names as the *Garin*: on the contrary he finds

¹⁴ Tavernier, *supra*, p. 210.

¹⁵ IV, 428.

a stumbling block that is to be avoided rather than removed or utilized. Bédier is right: his researches explain little, almost not at all, the *formation* of the *chanson de geste*. What he has done—it may be repeated—is first of all a valuable negative work—he has cleared the field of theories further from the truth than his own. On the positive side he has been limited to showing a connection between the pilgrimages and certain of the *chansons de geste*.¹⁸

III

If the sum total of our knowledge of the origin and age of the *chansons de geste* were to be expressed in a few sentences, the statement would be somewhat as follows.

Up to the present time, much of the work on the epic poetry has been vitiated by the partisan effort to assign the poetry to either French or German sources. On the Germanic side, there has been established with a high degree of probability the connection of the epic material with historic events as early as the seventh century, thus implying an unbroken tradition from the early German poetry of the Frankish invaders, and earlier. On the French side the effort has been to explain how the poetry may be considered purely French in origin. Finally Bédier shows a close connection of some of the poetry with political and social conditions of the twelfth century, and offers this period as the epoch of the origin of all the *chansons de geste*; although he himself says once (II, 293) that the oldest *chansons de geste* might go back to the tenth century, and thus unwittingly endangers his whole structure, and admits its weakness, depending as it does upon the truth of each basic element, and like a chain being only as strong as its weakest link.

This question, however, has been clouded by calling it the matter of *origin*. For before anything can be said of origin, the age must be determined. Now the analogy with historical events establishes nothing but that the poetry was composed

¹⁸ Cf. G. Huet, *Moyen Age*, 1913, 427-8: the jongleurs have simply adapted to the demands of a new public—the pilgrims—a sort of poetry already existing, and which had quite different origins.

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subsequently to the period of the fact. On the other hand, Bédier proves merely what had been already known, namely, that a part of the poetry was composed in the twelfth century. Even his theory of the monkish origin is nothing new, except for the scope of his treatment of a subject in which he had been preceded by two other scholars.¹⁷

The present study has evidenced the fact that the only undeniable, incontrovertible data on the age of the older epic poetry are to be found in the age of the social and political institutions and customs unconsciously reflected in that poetry by its composer. The evidence of this study is to the end that the earliest age to which any of the poetry can be assigned by reason of such internal data is the ninth century: that from that time on there was an unbroken tradition, which spread with greatest rapidity and in greatest extent at the height of the pilgrimage movement in the twelfth century, and died out in the first half of the thirteenth century.¹⁸ And these observations, limited as they must be by the scope of this study, point the way to a further analysis, less startling in its conclusions than Bédier's epoch-making hypothesis, but at the same time a richer field for reliable data on the age of the epic material—that is, in the customs, and social and political institutions, reflected in the poems, and proper to successive centuries respectively of the history of France in the early middle ages.

¹⁷ Cf. C. Jullian, *Histoire de Bordeaux*, 1895, p. 118: *qui sait si les pèlerins n'ont pas été les artisans principaux de ces légendes, les vrais rhapsodes de ces épopées, les attachant, pour ainsi dire, le long de la voie qu'ils parcouraient, aux sanctuaires où ils s'arrêtaient?* And P. A. Becker, *Grundriss der altfranzösischen Literatur*, Heidelberg, 1907, I, pp. 31-36, says the poems depend upon facts and names retained by the historians (i.e., the Church); that the poets securing these data, composed their songs along the pilgrimage routes, and recited the primitive legends at the fairs. Becker's departure from the old theory was as early as 1898.

¹⁸ Cf. P. Meyer, *Recherches sur l'épopée française*, Paris, 1867, p. 65. Cf. also F. Lot, *Romania*, XLII, 1913, p. 597: *On atténuera sans doute . . . l'influence directe du clergé dans la formation des épopées: les tombes et autres monuments figurés ont donné le branle à l'imagination des poètes, la société a inspiré l'esprit qui les anime . . . sans qu'il soit nécessaire d'admettre que ces œuvres soient dues à de véritables clercs.*

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